

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

27 January 2017

Report of the Head of Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services – Karen Jones

Matter for Information

Wards Affected:

All Wards

Members' Facilities

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide Members with an update in relation to the progress made with the provision of Members Facilities within Port Talbot Civic Centre and to provide information and planned improvements for the Neath Civic Centre.

Background

2. Following the formation of Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services in October, 2012, the provision of facilities for Members has been kept under review.

3. Where appropriate, improvements have been suggested to ensure that the democratic processes of the Council can operate more effectively and support Members in carrying out their duties and responsibilities, as well as assist Members of the Public properly seeing and hearing proceedings.
4. In particular, with regard to the Committee Rooms and Council Chamber located within the Port Talbot Civic Centre, very limited investment has been made in maintaining the equipment and facilities within these meeting venues since the creation of the authority in 1996.
5. As such, much of the audio and visual technology which had previously been utilised by Members had started to malfunction on a regular basis requiring continuous repair and maintenance and resulting in complaints.
6. This resulted in the necessity to put in place a programme of works to ensure that facilities particularly within the Port Talbot Civic Centre were sufficient to provide adequate meeting venues for the use of all Members, Officers and Members of the Public interested in attending Council meetings.
7. While facilities within Neath Civic Centre have not required the same level of works as have been undertaken for the Port Talbot Civic Centre, further works are currently being considered specifically in relation to improving the Committee Room audio facilities.

Progress

Port Talbot Civic Centre - Committee Rooms

8. Within the Committee Rooms a number of improvements have already been completed to again support Members in carrying out their role and assist in facilitating the democratic processes of the Council, including new audio/visual equipment.
9. In relation to the furniture within the Committee Rooms, due to the age and deteriorating condition of the current furnishings within the meeting venues, Members of the Committee were consulted on new plans to replace the current stock and relevant orders have now been placed.

10. The new equipment will provide Members, Officers and Members of the Public with fully adjustable seating to assist with extended meetings and fully adaptable meetings tables to allow for swift layout room changes as and when necessary.

Port Talbot Members' Room

11. As part of the renovation plans being carried out within the Port Talbot Civic Centre Committee Rooms, re-modelling works will also be undertaken with the Port Talbot Members' Room. This will offer Members more appropriate workspace areas as well as allowing improved access to power outlets for utilising and charging mobile devices such as laptops and tablets. The opportunity will also be taken to refresh basic fixtures and fittings.
12. Neath Civic Centre - Committee Rooms
13. To assist with the difficulties with the acoustics within the Neath Civic Centre Committee Rooms a full audio visual assessment is in the process of being conducted with plans to provide similar facilities as introduced to the Port Talbot Civic Centre Committee Rooms. The completion of such works should help to provide improved facilities for Members, Officers and Members of the public to better hear discussions and debate.

Opposition Group Offices

14. Due to the poor condition of the Opposition Group Offices, works will be carried out remove old and out dated furniture from these locations and provide more appropriate furnishings.
15. All works as outlined above are currently due to take place prior to the forthcoming Local Government Elections on 4 May, 2017.

Financial Impact

16. With regard to the improvements to Members' facilities, all relevant costs will be met within current accommodation budgets and, as such, the financial impact will be neutral.

Equality Impact Assessment

17. A screening assessment has been undertaken but a full equality impact assessment is not warranted.

Workforce Impacts

18. There are no workforce impacts associated with this report.

Legal Powers

19. There are no legal impacts associated with this report.

Risk Management

20. There are no significant risks associated with this report.

Consultation

21. There is no requirement under the Constitution for external consultation on this item.

Recommendations

22. That the Democratic Services Committee note the progress made in relation to Member facilities.

List of Background Papers

23. Office Layout/Equipment Information Summary (see attached).

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