

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

27 July 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 about 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. Members have been encouraged to suggest improvements so 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 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.

10. New furniture is now in place to provide Members, Officers and Members of the Public with fully adjustable seating to assist with extended meetings and fully adaptable meeting tables to allow for swift layout room changes as and when necessary.

Port Talbot Members' Room

11. As part of the renovation plans carried out within the Port Talbot Civic Centre Committee Rooms, re-modelling works have also been undertaken with the Port Talbot Members' Room.
12. Members have now been provided with more appropriate and adaptable workspace areas as well as improved access to power outlets for utilising and charging mobile devices such as laptops and tablets. The opportunity was also taken to refresh basic fixtures and fittings.
13. Neath Civic Centre - Committee Rooms
14. To assist with the difficulties with the acoustics within the Neath Civic Centre Committee Rooms and Board Room a full audio visual refit has been completed improving facilities for Members, Officers and Members of the public to better hear discussions and debate. Further work to upgrade the hearing loop system with the Committee Rooms is currently underway but should conclude over the summer.
15. A disability access assessment of all Committee Room facilities in the main Civic Centres will also be conducted with the assistance of Facilities Officers to evaluate whether any further works are required in due course.

Opposition Group Offices

16. Due to the poor condition of the Opposition Group Offices, works were carried out to remove old and out dated furniture from these locations. Following the relocation of the Leader's Office, the space has been reallocated to the Plaid Cymru and Independent Groups respectively, and it is hoped to make the new arrangements operational in September 2017.
17. Further discussions will be required with the opposition groups in relation to finalising any file archive transfer office prior to the conclusion of the relocation exercise.

Financial Impact

18. With regard to the improvements to Members' facilities, all relevant costs have been met within current accommodation budgets and, as such, there is no additional budget pressure.

Equality Impact Assessment

19. A screening assessment has been undertaken but a full equality impact assessment is not needed but work is being carried out to address access issues and Members will be fully updated on progress.

Workforce Impacts

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

Legal Powers

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

Risk Management

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

Consultation

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

Recommendations

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

Reason for Proposed Decision

25. Matter for information, no decision required.

List of Background Papers

26. None.

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