

# **NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

## **DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE**

**2 November 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.

#### **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. On 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2020, I reported my most recent assessment to the Democratic Services Committee on the adequacy of resources available to support the democratic services function of the Council. At that meeting, the Committee approved the establishment of a Democratic Services Manager.

The structure chart in Appendix 1 sets out the current structure of the Democratic Services Team.

4. Since March 2020, there have been a number of changes / developments that have impacted on the workload of Democratic Services:
  - a. The successful appointment of the Senior Scrutiny and Member Development Officer to the post of Democratic Services Manager
  - b. The retirement of the Senior Committee / Member Services Officer
  - c. The response to the Covid-19 emergency has had and continues to have a direct impact on the workload of Democratic Services as a result of introducing and holding meetings across remote meeting technologies. Use of remote technologies is requiring all those involved in supporting, chairing or participating in meetings to learn new skills. Direct support has been provided by Democratic Services to Members and Officers and it continues to significantly impact on the workload of the team.
  
5. In addition to the above, attention now needs to be given 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.
  - Publication of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill by the Welsh Assembly Government - this Bill proposes 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.
  
6. Taken together, these developments will increase the workload of Democratic Services and introduce changes to roles. When the requirements of the Bill become clearer a further assessment of resources will be undertaken.

## **Assessment of Resources**

7. Following the changes in staffing set out in 4a b and c above, a revised structure is set out in Appendix 2. It is proposed to replace the two Senior Officer posts (Grade 8) with two Democratic Services Officer posts (Grade 7).
8. The Grade 5 post is vacant following the promotion of the post holder to a Democratic Services Officer post (Grade 7) and will remain vacant until the skills and capacity required to implement the Bill become clearer.
9. 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:**

10. 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:**

11. No impact.

## **Workforce Impact:**

12. These changes will provide for more manageable workloads for the Democratic Services workforce.

## **Risk Management:**

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

## **Legal Powers:**

14. Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011.

### **Consultation:**

15. 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:**

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

### **Reason for Decision**

17. 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:**

18. After the three day call in period.

### **Appendices:**

19. Appendix 1 – Current structure chart - March 2020  
Appendix 2 – Proposed structure chart – October 2020

### **List of Background Papers:**

20. None

### **Officer Contact:**

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