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DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE REPORT

Date Written	28 th August 2014
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Service Area	Democratic Services
Exempt/Non Exempt	Non Exempt
Committee Date	15 th September 2014

To: Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES STRUCTURE

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT:

To provide Democratic Services Committee with an update on the structure and workload of the Democratic Services Department.

1.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Chapter 2 of Part 1 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 (“the Measure”) contains provisions for the strengthening of local democracy that specifically relate to the role of the Democratic Services Committee and Head of Democratic Services.
- 1.2 As part of these provisions, the Democratic Services Committee must keep under review the provision of staff, accommodation and other resources in order to ensure that they are adequate for the responsibilities of the post.
- 1.3 The Head of Democratic Services also has a responsibility to make recommendations in respect of:
 - The number and grades of staff required to discharge democratic services functions;
 - The appointment of staff to discharge democratic services functions; and
 - The organisation and proper management of staff discharging democratic services functions.

2.0 PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE DEMOCRATIC SERVICES SECTION

- 2.1 As part of the authority's drive to make financial savings without compromising efficiency, Corporate Management Team have made decisions in principle to progress the detail of a Corporate Spine.
- 2.2 The plans include the establishment of a Democratic Services and Executive Support Group. The purpose of the group would be to provide support for the Democratic Services role including committee, electoral and other specialist project work, and also includes the PA roles to the Chief Executive and Directors, cross-authority duties such as agenda preparation and action notes and general support to senior management.
- 2.3 The outcome would be a group of officers with the skills to cover a greater number of tasks, providing a more flexible service and less reliance on single points of dependency.
- 2.4 Within this arrangement, the opportunity would then be available to identify new job roles and job descriptions in line with appropriate job evaluation and development training.

3.0 LINE MANAGEMENT AND ACCOMMODATION

- 3.1 Effective line management and supervision for quality assurance and meeting of statutory responsibilities is essential to successfully embed this new arrangement.
- 3.2 Initial discussions favoured moving the management of all staff within the proposed group to the Business Services Department, appointing a supervisor to oversee the day to day organisation.
- 3.3 The Chief Executive, Directors, the Head of Democratic Services and Scrutiny Support Officer would then commission these staff to carry out specific functions.

4.0 ASSESSMENT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

- 4.1 The establishment of a Democratic Services and Executive Support Group is fully supported and welcomed. There are a number of initiatives that Democratic Services would like to introduce to improve the service, but the small size of the team prohibits this. A larger team would mean less reliance on single points of dependency and greater opportunities for succession planning.
- 4.2 There are, however, reservations in relation to the management of the service being moved to Business Services. Although the work Democratic Services does has been recognised as administrative, much of it has a high knowledge base and statutory responsibilities. Before any changes are implemented, there needs to be a clear understanding of how the support will be co-ordinated on a day to day basis.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

5.1 Whilst there are no discernible financial implications at this stage, at the end of the process there will undoubtedly be a call to identify any cost savings achieved by improved methods of working with a larger support group.

6.0 RECOMMENDATION(S) that

6.1 Democratic Services Committee note the concerns of the Head of Democratic Services.

6.2 If Committee feels it appropriate, the Democratic Services Committee take a report and recommendation(s) to Full Council on the provision of staff and accommodation as applicable.

ANN TAYLOR
HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

BACKGROUND PAPERS		
<i>Title of Document(s)</i>	<i>Document(s) Date</i>	<i>Document Location</i>

Consultation has been undertaken with Executive Board in respect of each proposal(s) and recommendation(s) set out in this report.