

**19 July 2017****Agenda Item: 8****REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES****CHANGES TO DEMOCRATIC SERVICES STAFFING STRUCTURE****Purpose of the Report**

1. To approve a revised staffing structure for Democratic Services to meet future demand and changed requirements.

**Information and Advice**

2. The existing staffing structure for Democratic Services was agreed in February 2014 (see Appendix 1) with a staffing establishment of 22.5 full time equivalent (FTE) posts. Subsequent changes linked to savings proposals reduced the staffing establishment further to its current level of 20.7 posts.
3. Following a review of requirements in light of the recent changes to the Council's committee structure, a proposed revised staffing structure is attached at Appendix 2. The proposed revised staffing establishment for Democratic Services is 14.5 FTE posts with provision for an additional flexible resource budget to meet seasonal and peak demand, particularly relating to education admission appeals.

**Governance Team**

4. The revised committee structure has resulted in a reduction in the number of committees and the overall number of committee meetings each year (along with related meetings and workload). However, it has been acknowledged that the revised Committees are all dealing with busy workloads and, in many cases, more complex issues. The skill and responsibility levels of Governance Team members within Democratic Services needs to reflect the demands of this new structure. It is therefore proposed to delete the Assistant Democratic Services Officers posts from the structure. It is also proposed that the number of Advanced Democratic Services Officers posts be reduced from two to one in light of the reduced staff management requirements.
5. The Governance Team in Democratic Services recently relocated to work alongside their colleagues in Legal Services. This closer working has already achieved efficiencies in terms of Democratic Services being able to utilise the existing Legal Services Business Support resource rather than fill existing full-time vacancies to deal largely with seasonal demand around the education appeals function.
6. As a further means of dealing with seasonal business support pressures, both

Democratic Services and Legal Services have also arranged paid, temporary work placements for Nottingham Trent University law students. Following the initial success of this arrangement this year it is proposed that a similar approach be followed, if needed, in future years.

7. It is proposed that the remaining two vacant Business Support Officer posts within Democratic Services be deleted with business support needs to be met from the existing Legal Services team as currently and from the temporary student placement.
8. It is also proposed to establish a Legal and Democratic Services apprenticeship post in order to offer an opportunity across the two teams. Further work is planned with Workforce Planning and Organisational Development colleagues to identify appropriate standards for this role. Discussions have also commenced with the Association of Democratic Services Officers to see whether there is potential to develop a new apprenticeship as part of the Government's apprenticeship Trailblazer initiative. This will enable the Council to meet revised statutory duties and draw down funding from the Apprenticeship Levy.

### **Education Appeals**

9. As well as supporting the democratic function of the Council, the Governance Team also successfully manages the Council's arrangements and responsibilities around Education Appeals (both admission appeals and exclusion reviews). This area of work can prove problematic in that, in order to meet statutory deadlines, there are very busy seasonal peaks with this work that have to be managed alongside the ongoing committee meetings and any election arrangements.
10. In recent years, Democratic Services have tried various approaches to manage the impact of the number and complexity of education admission appeals. The bulk of the appeals continue to be clerked by Democratic Services Officers, Assistant Democratic Services Officers and Advanced Democratic Services Officers although various other temporary resourcing measures have also been piloted.
11. The current proposal is to look to establish a pool of external clerks who can be used on an ad hoc basis as a flexible resource to meet seasonal and other peak demand. This will enable the governance team to concentrate on the core business of democratic services and to enable a more balanced workload spread across the municipal year. If it proves possible to develop such a resource then further consideration will need to be given to the co-ordination of this and other aspects of the Education Appeals work.

### **Support to Political Groups**

12. The support available to the various political groups, dependent upon the number of Councillors in each group, was agreed by Administration Committee on 16 April 2013. For the majority group it was agreed that a degree of flexibility to take account of Councillors' needs should be considered when deciding on staffing requirements.
13. In accordance with the arrangements agreed by Administration Committee, the Ashfield Independents Group will receive support from a 0.5 FTE administrative and research officer.

14. Because the new majority group is made up of two political parties (Conservatives and Mansfield Independents Forum) it is proposed that the current Minority Groups Research Officer, who supported the Mansfield Independent Forum Members (Independent Group) in the previous administration, moves to support the new majority group in a revised role. The proposed reductions in the Governance Team will mean that there is little or no scope for support to the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Council in their civic role. It is therefore proposed that such support is provided by this postholder, and that this post, in addition, provides cover for the Senior Researcher and the Personal Assistant in the Majority Group and is retitled Research and Civic Support. This post will have a revised job description developed which will require evaluation under the Council's scheme.
15. Affected staff and the Trades Unions have been consulted on the proposed structure in accordance with the employment procedures rules. One written response to the consultation was received. This raised concerns about reduced opportunities for progression within the new structure and a reduced variety of tasks within the Democratic Services Officer role. The progression issue is recognised and it is hoped that the proposed apprenticeship post may create an opportunity for development within the team overall. With regard to the variety of tasks, Democratic Services Officers will still undertake a broad range of duties within the overall workload of the Governance Team (including some Education Appeal clerking as and when needed) but the new structure enables officers to concentrate on the key tasks of supporting Councillors and the decision making process.
16. It is anticipated that the various redundancies involved within the Governance Team can be achieved through voluntary agreement, with timescales negotiable to address business need and appropriate transition. There will be a phased implementation of the changes with the new structure planned to be fully implemented by January 2018.
17. In line with the timescales for reviewing the new committee structure, it is proposed that the new staffing structure be reviewed in 6 months' time to ensure it is appropriate to meet business need.

### **Other Options Considered**

18. To retain the existing system. This is not felt to be an appropriate option in light of the reduced committee workload and ongoing need for greater flexibility to deal with the various aspects of the Democratic Services team's remit.

### **Reason for Recommendation**

19. The proposed new structure will ensure that Democratic Services:
  - will be appropriately staffed;
  - can better respond to the needs of the revised committee structure;
  - can better respond to the changing landscape, available technological advances and the need to undertake business in different ways;

- can seek to maintain, where demand continues, its offer to external bodies, including the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, various academies for education appeals and other councils in relation to supporting the Nottinghamshire Police and Crime Panel and the City of Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Joint Economic Prosperity Committee, which together currently achieve an annual average income of approximately £120,000.

## **Statutory and Policy Implications**

20. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, service users, sustainability and the environment and ways of working and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

## **Financial Implications**

21. The net saving on an annual basis (including on-costs) of the proposed new structure is approximately £175,000. It is proposed that an element of this saving be retained towards the costs of the additional flexible resource required throughout the year (at this stage it is difficult to forecast likely demands on this but it is unlikely to exceed £40,000).

## **Human Resources Implications**

22. The revised structure has been the subject of consultation with the recognised trades unions and individuals affected by the proposals. A meeting to discuss the revised arrangements with the trades unions took place on 26 May and two consultation meetings were also arranged for Democratic Services staff and the trades unions on 6 and 13 June.
23. The revised structure will be populated in accordance with the Council's agreed employment policies and procedures paying due consideration to the vacancy control process, redeployment and enabling procedures.
24. To ensure the new arrangements are robust and fit for purpose, a review of the revised arrangements is proposed to take place six months after the revised structure is established.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1) That the revised staffing structure for Democratic Services, attached at Appendix 2, be approved.
- 2) That the revised staffing structure be reviewed after six months to ensure business needs are being appropriately met.

**Jayne Francis-Ward**  
**Corporate Director, Resources**

**For any enquiries about this report please contact:**

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**Constitutional Comments (KK – 22/6/17)**

25. The proposals within this report are within the remit of the Governance and Ethics Committee.

**Financial Comments (SES 23/6/17)**

26. The financial implications are set out in the report

**Background Papers and Published Documents**

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

- Report to Policy Committee – 5 February 2014 and minutes of that meeting (published)
- Report to Administration Committee – 16 April 2013 (published) and minutes of that meeting.

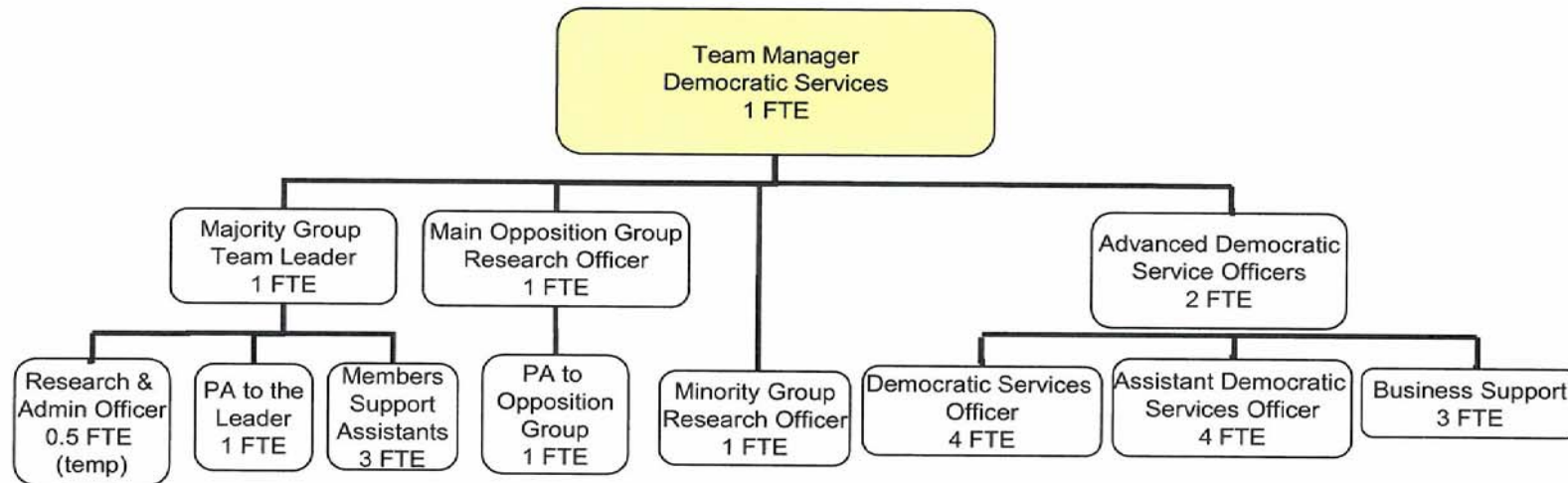
**Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

- All

## APPENDIX 1 – EXISTING STRUCTURE CHART (SUBJECT TO SUBSEQUENT CHANGES)

Structure Chart for **Democratic Services**

Ref: PPCS 1.4.4



Version: 1.1

Date: 02 Jan 14

## APPENDIX 2 - PROPOSED REVISED STRUCTURE CHART

