

4 March 2020**Agenda Item: 10****REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, CUSTOMERS, GOVERNANCE AND
EMPLOYEES / MONITORING OFFICER****REVIEW OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES STAFFING STRUCTURE****Purpose of the Report**

1. To seek approval for amendments to the staffing structure for Democratic Services to better meet current and future demand.

Information

2. The existing structure for Democratic Services was agreed by Governance and Ethics Committee in July 2017, with a subsequent review in May 2018 agreeing the current staffing establishment of 13.8 full time equivalent (FTE) posts. The initial restructure in 2017 saw a number of experienced officers leaving the team and a significant reduction in the number of posts previously within the team from 20.7 FTE posts. This itself followed a reduction from 22.5 FTE posts agreed in February 2014.
3. The Committee agreed that this new staffing structure be reviewed after twelve months to ensure business needs were being appropriately met, with a further report submitted to this Committee if that review determined that further changes were required.
4. Although the last restructure has proven largely successful the planned review of the team structure has been carried out as agreed and a number of new and ongoing issues have been identified. These include the need for additional resources and management capacity; the need for resources to plan, prepare for and support the County Council Elections; the ongoing requirements for support for Education Appeals and the need to ensure adequate support for elected Members.

Resource requirements

5. Since the current structure was agreed, the Communities and Place Review and Development Committee was established by Full Council on 20 September 2018. The report that proposed the establishment of this Committee recognised that resources within the Governance Team were already stretched and that this Committee would likely bring additional demands on resources. This has proven to be the case.
6. The work of the Governance & Ethics Committee has also continued to increase as this relatively new Committee becomes fully established. This has included the use of time-limited

cross-party working groups (for example, to deal with the Review of Outside Bodies and the Appointment of the Council's Independent Persons) and the introduction of new monitoring and reporting mechanisms (for example around Councillors' Use of Resources and the Councillors' Divisional Fund). It is envisaged that such ways of working will continue and that this will impact upon the workloads of the Governance Team, and the Team Manager.

7. The response to the Local Government Association Peer Review which took place in June 2019 recommended a review of administrative and support processes in relation to the Council's governance arrangements. This will result in a more proactive approach and increased input from Democratic Services staff in relation to supporting officers with the decision-making process, report writing guidance and training, advice to Chief Officers and report authors and an enhanced role in relation to quality assurance of reports.

County Council Elections

8. The outcomes of the internal audit of the 2017 election highlighted a need for greater management capacity within Democratic Services to enable enhanced oversight to be maintained. The 2021 election will not involve additional support from external advisors as in previous elections so a greater capacity at management level will be required to cover the necessary oversight and project management of the election project plan.
9. In light of the Electoral Commission's requirements for enhanced reporting and appropriate assurances to be provided, greater capacity across Democratic Services will be needed in the run-up to the election. Planning for the 2021 elections has now commenced and the Democratic Services Team Manager will take a lead role in organising this and co-ordinating efforts of departmental colleagues as well as the vital liaison required with colleagues at District and Borough Councils across the County area.

Education Appeals

10. A temporary resource to support the education appeals service, governance work and Members has now been in place for over a year, and a review of the demands on this post has identified a permanent need for this support going forwards. Currently this need is met from temporary agency staff. The establishment of an additional Assistant Democratic Services officer post would ensure Appeal panels continue to be properly advised and supported whilst ceasing the existing requirement for agency staff.
11. The temporary annual placements of Nottingham Trent University law undergraduates to assist the education appeals process in the peak first admissions period have proven successful and it is proposed that this should continue in the future. This involves an initial three-month temporary appointment, which has been further extended for between one-three additional months depending on levels of demand.

Support for Members

12. As reported to the Committee on 17 December 2019, the Member Communication and Engagement Programme of work continues to progress, with Democratic Services being expected to take a lead role on the development of an increased comprehensive training offer

for Councillors. This will include providing in-house packages as well as establishing links with external providers and relevant organisations such as East Midlands Councils and the Local Government Association. Other strands of work relating to member support arrangements will also require ongoing input from officers in Democratic Services, particularly in the Governance team.

13. The previous restructure in May 2018 proposed a reduction in the level of support to the Chairman and Vice-Chairman. However, the level of activity by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman has increased as the Council has sought to maximise opportunities for the Chairman's role as First Citizen to be appropriately recognised and supported. This has resulted in an increase in the number and profile of civic events hosted by the County Council.
14. Following the restructure in May 2018 support was provided through a single, part-time post which also provided support to a political group. However, it is now recognised that the degree of resilience and flexibility previously afforded by providing this support from within the Governance Team could not be replicated in this arrangement. It is also felt to be more appropriate for civic support to be provided from outside of the support arrangements to the main political groups, in recognition that the civic heads are essentially non-political roles.
15. Civic support is currently being provided on a temporary basis by a Democratic Services Officer within the Governance Team. It is proposed that the civic support duties continue to be undertaken from within the Governance Team.

Management Capacity

16. In addition to the specific additional management requirements identified above there is an increasing need to build in more management capacity to enable the service to develop more strategically and to share national best practice through organisations such as the Association of Democratic Services Officers. The work undertaken on the Council's Constitution in 2019 highlighted this as an important area of work and area for ongoing development.
17. Experiences over the past year have also highlighted a lack of resilience at management level during periods of planned and unplanned absence and limited capacity to provide mentoring and coaching to develop less experienced staff within the team.
18. The service itself has also recognised the need to ensure sufficient capacity to enable appropriate final quality assurance checks are undertaken in relation to published agenda packs.

Proposals

19. In light of the above overall capacity issues it is proposed that a new Assistant Democratic Services Officer post be established to support work across the Governance Team.
20. It is also proposed that an additional Assistant Democratic Services Officer post be established, focussing particularly on Education Appeals and that this post should report directly to the Education Appeals Manager.
21. It is proposed that the generic Assistant Democratic Services officer post and the new post focussing on Education Appeals should work together to provide cover for each other,

enabling the greater flexibility and resilience lacking in the recent arrangements. These two posts will also provide some additional administrative cover across the political groups. This was previously provided in the past by the Governance Team but has not been possible in the latest structures due to the removal of dedicated business support to the Team.

22. To provide greater experience at a senior level and additional day to day management capacity it is proposed to establish an Additional Advanced Democratic Services Officer post. This new post will enable the Team Manager to focus on oversight, leadership and development of the team and the services it provides to the public, members and officers across the Council. This post will also provide enhanced career progression opportunities within the team.

23. The proposed revised staffing structure for Democratic Services is attached at Appendix 1 with a revised staffing establishment of 16.8 FTE.

Financial Implications

24. In summary, it is proposed that the following new posts be established:-

| <u>Job Title / focus</u> | <u>Salary Scale</u> | <u>Overall costs (including on-costs)</u> |
|---|----------------------------|--|
| Advanced Democratic Services Officer (FT) | C | £47,976 |
| Assistant Democratic Services Officer / Education Appeals (FT) | NJE 5 | £31,053 |
| Assistant Democratic Services Officer / Civic Support (FT) | NJE 5 | £31,053 |
| SUB-TOTAL: | | £110,082 |
| Minus estimated full-year costs of existing temporary agency resource | | (£23,000) |
| TOTAL: | | £87,082 |

25. It is anticipated that the costs will be met from the Contingency Budget. If approved, this request for contingency will be reported in the next Financial Monitoring Report submitted to the Finance & Major Contracts Management Committee.

Other Options Considered

26. To retain the existing structure. This is not felt to be an appropriate option in light of the issues identified in the review and the current impact on existing members of staff.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

27. The proposed new structure will ensure that Democratic Services

- continues to be appropriately staffed in light of the additional work required of the team
- can better respond to the needs of the revised committee structure
- can provide more dedicated support to Members, including Civic Heads

- are able to support improvements in the quality of reports for consideration by Committees
- can prepare, plan and provide appropriate support for the 2021 County Council Elections
- can seek to maintain 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.

Statutory and Policy Implications

28. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Human Resources Implications

29. The posts will be evaluated using the Council's agreed job evaluation scheme and appointed to using the Council's agreed policies and procedures. Staff within the team are aware of the proposals, the additional levels of support and opportunities they provide for staff working within the team.

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the revised staffing structure for Democratic Services, attached at Appendix 1, be approved.
2. To make a request to the Finance & Major Contracts Committee to approve £87,082 to be funded from contingency.

Marjorie Toward

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For any enquiries about this report please contact:

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Constitutional Comments (SS 19/02/2020)

30. The Governance and Ethics Committee are the appropriate committee to consider this report and effect appropriate staffing changes, where appropriate.

Financial Comments (SES 25/02/2020)

31. The financial implications are set out in paragraph 24 and 25 of the report. This proposed expenditure is over and above the current Democratic Services staffing budget. If approved, it will be requested that the Finance and Major Contracts Management Committee approve that these costs are met from contingency.

Human Resources Comments (JP 20/02/20)

32. The Authority's agreed HR policies and procedures will be used as set out at para 28.

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.

- Review of Democratic Services Staffing Structure – report to Governance and Ethics Committee on 2nd May 2018.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

- All