

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE: 17 December 2014

REPORT OF THE COUNTY CLERK AND MONITORING OFFICER
AGENDA ITEM: 7

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES UPDATE

Reason for this Report

1. To update the Committee on the provision of staff, accommodation and other resources made available to support Members

Background

2. The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 requires the Council to appoint a Democratic Services Committee. The Committee's duties include appointing a Head of Democratic Services and keeping under review the provision of staff, accommodation and other resources made available to support members.
3. At its meeting on the 5 February 2013 the Committee appointed Geoff Shimell as Interim Head of Democratic Services [HDS].
4. The functions of the HDS are set out in the Local Government Measure and relate to the provision of advice and support to Non-Executive Members as part of the democratic process and all Councillors when carrying out their representational role.
5. Democratic Services provide a politically impartial service to all Members of Cardiff Council. The staff support, inform and record the work of the Council and its Scrutiny and other Committees. They make the Council's meetings and information about those meetings accessible to the general public, and they maintain a public record of all Member level decisions and documents in trust for the public. The service also provides Member Development, ICT and a limited degree of personal support for Members in dealing with case work correspondence

Resources 2014/15

6. Budget savings of £454,000 for 2014/15 for Democratic Services were agreed representing 29.9% of the then net controllable budget. This included £246,000 in Scrutiny Services reflecting the deletion of four vacant posts together with increased income. Savings of £183,000 were also agreed in Committee and Member Services including deletion of

vacant posts, acceptance of voluntary severance applications and a restructure of management responsibilities, clerking fewer meetings and more efficient use of ICT.

7. Further savings of £16,000 have also been found in 2014/15 through the removal of Committee general expenditure budgets and £9,000 from the removal Member refreshment budgets and the budget for Council Year Books.
8. On a positive note, following the Peer Review in 2013/14 the Council agreed an additional sum to create a new Operational Manager post to support the Organisational Change programme agreed by Cabinet in May 2014 and to lead on a range of improving governance projects within Democratic Services. Additional secretarial support has also been transferred to the team. Contact has also been made with Cardiff Universities to provide work experience to undergraduate students starting in the New Year and to create a post graduate training opportunity as a further means of providing additional support for members.
9. The Member Development Strategy has been refreshed and a more comprehensive programme of Member Development has been delivered following an all Member survey earlier in the year.
10. Work has also been completed to review Members research and information requirements and an on line information service has been scoped to be delivered later in the year with improved working space for Members in County Hall. We have also introduced a monthly Members' Newsletter and a weekly Members' Diary service.
11. Investment was also agreed in 2014/15 to ensure that the Council is well placed to deal with the e-modernisation era within local government and the electronic delivery of democratic information to Members and the public. The Public I webcasting contract was renewed. The Members ICT Project was agreed alongside the purchase of Modern.gov - an up to date Committee decisions management system

Resources 2015/16

12. Resources for the coming year are now being considered. As the Committee will be aware the Council is facing a further challenging financial position with reduced government support and increased demand for next year. Democratic Services have been asked to submit proposals to save £218,000 for consultation. These are set out below for the Committee to consider.

CLK1	Mini restructure to reduce administrative, legal and protocol support to County Clerk & Monitoring Officer - reduction of 4.5 FTE posts.	D + I	£141k
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CLK2	Reduce Member Expenses and Support Services - by removing Dictabank services, reduction in training and mayoral expenses.	D	£37k
CLK3	Savings from Members ICT projects - savings from reduction in printing, telephone expenses and broadband lines.	E,F,G	£40k

13. Inevitably these proposals if agreed will impact on day to day general administrative support to the Lord Mayoralty and Non-Executive Members. However the investment in the Members IT project, savings from reduced printing costs, telephony and broadband accounts and the self service facilities within Modern.Gov will provide some mitigation. The Members Training Budget rarely fully spends from year to year and there is scope to share training resource within the Council for employees with Elected Members.
14. The statutory work in supporting the Lord Mayoralty, Committee and Council meetings will continue as will the current level of support for the Scrutiny Committees.
15. The Committee is recommended to leave the current interim Head of Democratic Service in position until the budget proposals are decided so as to take account of the proposed mini restructure within the service.

Legal Implications

16. The relevant statutory framework is referred to in the body of the report

Financial Implications

17. There are no direct new financial implications arising from this report

Recommendations:

That the Democratic Services Committee:

1. notes and agrees the position for 2014/15 in relation to the provision of staff, accommodation and other resources made available for Democratic Services
2. considers the savings proposals set out in paragraphs 12 – 14 and agrees to continue the current interim arrangements for the Head of Democratic Services

MARIE ROSENTHAL
COUNTY CLERK AND MONITORING OFFICER
10 December 2014