

## **REPORT OF THE INTERIM HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

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### **MEMBERS SUPPORT SERVICES UPDATE**

#### **Reason for this Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to update the Democratic Services Committee with information relating to the support provided to Elected Members.

#### **Background**

2. The Democratic Services Committee's remit is to review the adequacy of provision by the authority of support services provided to Elected Members in accordance with the Local Government (Wales) Act 2011.

#### **Issues**

##### Support to Members

3. At its meeting on 20 January 2016, the Committee endorsed the report and recommendations of the Task Group on the Review of Support Services to Members. The Director of Governance and Legal Services shared the report with the Cabinet Member for Skills, Safety & Engagement ahead of the Budget setting process for 2016/17.
4. The Cabinet Member provided a response to the report on 20 September 2016 which is attached as Appendix A and any further updates on progress since September will be reported to the meeting.
5. At the Committee's meeting on 23 March 2016, Members noted that the Cabinet had commissioned a Councillor Support Review to consider the level of support available to Councillors. This exercise was facilitated by a former policy officer of Nottingham City Council.

##### Member Enquiry System (MES)

6. This Committee receives regular updates on the Member Enquiry System to allow for feedback and discussion.
7. The Table 1 provides an update on the number and types of Member enquires made on the months specified below.

Table 1

Enquiry Type	June 15	July 16	Aug 16	Sep 16	Oct 16
<b>Total Enquiries</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>232</b>	<b>231</b>	<b>212</b>	<b>253</b>
Member logged	167	156	145	159	170
Officer logged	83	76	86	53	83
Request for Service	23	11	18	9	15

8. In November 2016 the system moved to the 'nethelpdesk' platform which fundamentally for Members looked the same but provided improvements to the back office administration and tracking of cases. In November 2016 the numbers of calls were 338.
9. The system provides useful data on trends and tracking of cases for directorates and it is important that enquiries are logged on this system to give an accurate analysis of issues and trends to inform service improvements.
10. The Committee has previously discussed matters relating to casework and the timely and adequacy of responses; and the support required particularly for back bench Members. Members recognise the good level of support given by the two Member Enquiry System Support Officers, and stated that the issues of concern relate to service responses.
11. To support improvements to the service to Members the support for the Members Enquiry System is planned to move to Members Services so that the Committee & Members Services team who support Members in their roles and will be able to give greater administrative support for casework; tracking progress of calls and following up issues for Councillors.

#### Member Exit Survey

12. This Committee in collaboration with the Standards and Ethics Committee following the meeting of Full Council on 24 November have prepared an Exit Survey of all Members to seek to understand Members' experiences of being a Councillor; reasons for standing down; and their views on induction and training opportunities for new Councillors. ( Appendix B to follow)

#### **Legal Implications**

13. There are no other direct legal implications arising from the content of this report.

## **Financial Implications**

14. The Corporate Director Resources/ Section 151 Officer and Director of Governance and Legal Services make any required adjustments to in – year budget to accommodate any new posts and a growth bid be submitted for 2017/18 if required.

## **Recommendations**

The Committee is requested: -

- (1) to note the response received from the Cabinet Member, Skills, Safety & Engagement and any further updates provided to the meeting;
- (2) to note that the Director of Governance and Legal Services will be progressing the realignment of services to Members within her Directorate and the consequential resourcing of these services;
- (3) to consider and provide feedback on the Members Exit Survey.

**GEOFF SHIMELL**

**Acting Head of Democratic Services**

1 December 2016

Appendix A: - Cabinet response to Task Group on the Review of Support Services to Members (20 September).

Appendix B: Member Exit Survey (Nov 2016)