

Report to: Cabinet



Date of Meeting 25 November 2020

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

Resourcing within Democratic Services

Report summary:

To explain the work pressures within Democratic Services and to request additional resource in the form of one Grade 6 post.

Recommendation:

That Cabinet agree to an additional Grade 6 post (one FTE) within Democratic Services and recommend to Council to approve the necessary budget.

Reason for recommendation:

To ensure that Democratic Services are able to fulfil their function in relation to the Council's governance arrangements.

Officer: Henry Gordon Lennox, Strategic Lead (Governance & Licensing)

Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- Climate Action
- Coast, Country and Environment
- Corporate Services and COVID-19 Response and Recovery
- Democracy and Transparency
- Economy and Assets
- Finance
- Policy Co-ordination and Regional Engagement
- Strategic Planning
- Sustainable Homes and Communities

Financial implications:

This is request for an additional staff resource with an associated annual cost of between £33,790 and £37,270. This will require an additional budget and was not assumed in the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) assumptions previously presented to members. If approved this will add to MTFP financial budget gap and will be require to be found as part of preparing the 2021/22 budget for Members consideration.

Legal implications:

There are no implications requiring comment

Equalities impact: Low Impact

Climate change: Low Impact

Risk: Medium Risk; Not having sufficient resources within Democratic Services means the Council is at risk of not properly following its legal duties and constitutional requirements in terms of governance arrangements.

Links to background information:

Link to [Council Plan](#):

Priorities (check which apply)

- Outstanding Place and Environment
- Outstanding Homes and Communities
- Outstanding Economic Growth, Productivity, and Prosperity
- Outstanding Council and Council Services

Report in full

1. Democratic Services provide the governance administration function within the Council. This necessitates the organisation, calling and clerking of all the formal Council meetings and related panels and forums as well as liaising with other bodies and organisations to ensure the Council is appropriately represented where there are joint responsibilities or involvement outside of the organisation.
2. Since May 2019, there has been a number of additional groups created and there continues to be decisions to create groups or change the remit of groups, all of which has, and will continue to, create extra work for the Team. For example, new groups include the Car Parking TaFF, Governance Review Working Party, Housing Company TaFF and Poverty Working Panel while the Exmouth Queens Drive Delivery Group has now become public. The increasing workload has been flagged to the Cabinet / membership before in the reports when some of these groups have been created.
3. In addition there are more meetings being called than those programmed which are necessary to deal with business e.g. Strategic Planning Committee (GESP), Cabinet and as well as Council. It goes without saying that these increase the burden on the team and impact negatively on their capacity.
4. It is accepted that some of the additional work due to the above is as a consequence of Covid-19, but this pandemic has of itself caused extra work load, not least due to the requirements of virtual meetings - having to implement Zoom - and ensure meetings are capable of delivering governance arrangements. This latter aspect has necessitated having more than one member of staff in attendance due to the complexity of the meeting arrangements and having to provide a 'second' (and occasionally a third) to protect against technical issues affecting the primary host as well as a lot more administration in terms of meeting preparation work. These resource implications remain live and are likely to continue into next year. One can foresee the Government extending the flexible meeting arrangements in May and more longer term it is reasonable to expect that there will be changes to permit more flexible arrangements (e.g. hybrid meetings) going forward. Invariably any change that permits anything other than a return to the Council Chamber is likely to cause increased resourcing issues.
5. The Team currently comprises a manager and five permanent members of staff (overall equivalent to 5.2 FTE). In late 2019 and early in 2020 one of the permanent members of staff was off with a long term sickness issue and during that time cover was provided by way of agency support (effectively on a full time basis). Despite the employee returning to work following the sickness, the agency employee has continued to work and is currently working for us on a full time basis.
6. The above demonstrates that the work levels are such that there is justification for the additional post. Indeed, if we were to cease using agency support the Team would not have

capacity to take on the work leading to real risks in terms of the administration of the Council's business as well as the welfare within the Team. While including a post in the staffing compliment, it would save unbudgeted agency expenditure.