Report of the Head of Democratic Services

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DEMOCRATIC SERVICES FUNCTION

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Members will be aware of the requirement under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 ("the Measure") for each local authority to establish a Democratic Services Committee. The Measure also requires the Council to designate one of its officers to the statutory post of "Head of Democratic Services" and provide that officer with sufficient resources to discharge these statutory functions.

This report provides the Committee with an outline of the staff resources available to support the democratic process, together with a brief synopsis of duties undertaken over the past 12 months, ongoing developments and plans for the future to support Members in their respective roles.

Democratic Services Staffing Resources

Staffing resource to support the Democratic Service is split into three distinct teams:-

a) Committee Support
b) Civic & Member Support
(both under the management of the Head of Democratic Services)
c) Executive Board support
(under the management of the Chief Executives' Business Support Manager)

As Head of Democratic Services I confirm that staffing resources are considered adequate to allow me to discharge democratic services functions and is consistent with the outcomes of a TIC review of the service held during 2017/18.

An outline of the structure and work of the teams is detailed below:-

Committee Support

This is a team of 6 staff, comprising a Principal Democratic Services Officer, 5 Democratic Services Officers and an Assistant Democratic Services Office which was created as a result of funding through Joint Working agreements. The team provides a wide range of services to the Executive, Regulatory and Scrutiny Committees and is also responsible for servicing a number of Joint Working arrangements i.e. Wales Pension Partnership Joint Governance Committee, Dyfed Powys Police & Crime Panel, and ERW Joint Committee. The team provides advice and support in relation to the Council Constitution, law and practice relating to committee administration, advice on the role of Councillors, protocols and code of conduct and supports the democratic function in the production of handbooks, research and liaison with external bodies as part of Scrutiny Task and Finish reviews.

In addition the team administer the School admission appeals process and facilitate the work of the Independent Admission Appeals Panel.

During the period January 2019 – October 2019 the team serviced 292 meetings and processed 257 School Admission Appeals.

Civic & Member Support

The team consists of a Principal Democratic Services Officer, 3 x Member Support Officers, 1 x part-time Official Car Driver together with casual driver support. The Team is the designated point of contact for all non- executive elected member enquiries (64) and provides a comprehensive support function to the Chair of Council, and non-executive elected members. The team also undertakes, on request, research and information gathering and diary co-ordination for the Leader of the Opposition.

The Civic & Member Support team administer the Councillor Enquiries system, facilitate member's expenses, non-executive member day to day correspondence including local surgery notices, support the production of their annual reports, arrange attendance at Conference and Seminars and operate the Authority's webcasting of Council meetings. The team also support to-opted members of the Authority.

During the period January 2019 – October 2019 the team processed 2449 Councillor Enquiries and webcast 43 meetings.

Business Support for the Executive Board

The Executive Board support team located within the Business Support unit, provides business support for the Chief Executive, Leader of the Council, and 9 Executive Board Members. This includes professional advice, research and information gathering, preparing speeches, day to day correspondence, arrange EBM attendance at Conference and Seminars and diary co-ordination. The team consists of the Executive Board Support Officer (directly responsible to the Business Support Manager) a Business Support Officer (Leader Support) and 1 designated Executive Board support officer. The Business Support Team also provides business support for the Chief Executive's department.

Elected Member Support & Accommodation

All elected members are allocated a tablet device and laptop computer, and have access to printing facilities within Council offices. As from May 2017 local government elections, all

elected Members can also claim a £20 per month communication allowance (returning members were offered the option on retaining their Authority issued Broadband or moving over to the Communication Allowance). 56 members have opted to receive the allowance with the remainder making use of the Authority issued broadband.

The Council moved to a paperless meeting environment in September 2019. Members can access their emails, council diary, committee papers and the Authority's intranet site via their iPads, and the 'Modern.gov' app, this allows members to perform their duties as efficiently as possible and the facilities they need both inside and outside office hours.

Elected member are also provided with a @sirgar.gov.uk / @carmarthenshire.gov.uk email address to be used for all electronic communication in relation to Council business. No communication will be accepted via personal email addresses.

Co-opted members also receive an authority issued iPad and email address, and have access to printing facilities and support services at Council Offices.

All members are also provided with basic office supplies, such as pens, pencils, files, paper envelopes etc and also direct practical support from the Democratic Services Unit (non-exec members) or the Business Support Unit (Executive Board Members). Members are also encouraged to access information via the Democracy Tab on the Authority's intranet site.

The following accommodation is currently available for elected members and co-optees, all accommodation includes telephone and IT equipment to assist members with their duties:-

- Members' Lounge – Carmarthen & Llanelli
- Chairman's Room – Carmarthen & Llanelli – by appointment.
- Leaders Office – Carmarthen, Llanelli & Ammanford
- Executive Board Member accommodation x 5 - Carmarthen
- Main Opposition Group Leaders' Office – Carmarthen
- Main Opposition Group Room – Llanelli
- A small meeting room is also available within County Hall for Elected members to use by appointment.

As part of the Authority's agile working proposals additional meeting facilities are proposed for County Hall, Carmarthen.

Meetings of the County Council normally take place in the Chamber at County Hall, Carmarthen. Committees of the Council normally meet in the Chamber, County Hall, Carmarthen or the Chamber, Council Offices, 3 Spilman Street, Carmarthen. Refreshments are also available at these locations.

Car Parking

Councillors are provided with designated car parking spaces at County Hall, Carmarthen which can be used, only when attending formal meetings of the Council or its committees. Councillor car parking spaces are shared with members of staff and are therefore unavailable at all other times.

Member Development

The Learning and Development Service within the People Management and Performance Unit in consultation with the Democratic Services Unit support all Councillors to develop the

necessary skills, knowledge and behaviour to fulfil their roles effectively, thus ensuring the Council meets its key aims and priorities. To this end, both units work together to promote learning and development opportunities which support Councillors in continuously developing their roles, both as part of the Council's decision making processes and in the communities they serve.

Priorities for 2020

- A move towards Councillor expenses - self service
- Democratic Accommodation Review as part of Agile Working arrangements for County Hall. The proposal is to create more formal democratic meeting rooms within County Hall.
- Revised Committee templates, including Integrated Impact Assessment element.
- Councillor Enquiries – integration with the Authority's new CRM system