

**BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**REPORT TO THE DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE**  
**25 OCTOBER 2012**

**REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**  
**DEMOCRATIC SERVICES - STRUCTURE, SERVICES AND SUPPORT**

**1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the Democratic Services Committee of the current structure, services and support provided to elected members.

**2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Objectives/Other Corporate Priorities**

- 2.1 The support provided by the Democratic Services team to elected members at all levels assists in the achievement of all corporate priorities.

**3. Background**

- 3.1 The Democratic Services team was formed as a result of an audit of the support provided to elected members carried out by the Wales Audit Office in 2009. The outcomes identified in the recommendations have been achieved and demonstrated by the attainment of the WLGA Charter for Member Support and Development in 2010.

- 3.2 Prior to the implementation of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 the Democratic Services team consisted of:

- Members & Mayoral
- Committees
- PA to the Leader
- Cabinet Support

- 3.3 With the implementation of the Measure the responsibility for Scrutiny was included within the remit of the Head of Democratic Services and therefore the Scrutiny section now forms part of the Democratic Services team. A diagram of the structure of Democratic Services is shown at **Appendix 1**.

**4. Current situation / proposal**

- 4.1 The Democratic Service team provides a multitude of diverse support services and liaises with internal and external agencies to provide the necessary support to enable elected members to undertake their role effectively. An outline of the services provided by the Democratic Services team is shown at **Appendix 2**.

## 4.2 Key Support and Services - Democratic Services Team

### 4.2.1 Member Referrals

The member referral system allows queries raised on behalf of constituents, to be referred to an appropriate department within the council or to an external service provider to be addressed. Referrals cover a vast array of services and issues including highways maintenance, leisure facilities, housing and social services.

Between 3 May and the end 30 September 2012, 1209 referrals have been received, with 92.56% being successfully completed. Outstanding referrals relate to long term issues that may take many months to fully address. All outstanding referrals are reviewed on a regular basis by the team to ensure that they are completed at the earliest opportunity.

To improve the efficiency and accountability of the member referral process, it was transferred to the Open Ticket Recording System (OTRS) which has improved the ability to monitor the progress of referrals, enable the provision of basic performance information and allow interaction by elected members with their queries.

### 4.2.1 Corporate and Civic Functions

The Democratic Services team organises, co-ordinates and delivers many of the corporate and civic functions which support the Mayor and the Authority. Events of this type are complex to organise and co-ordinate because of their high profile nature and the participation of a variety of dignitaries from across Wales and members of the public.

The most recent corporate event was the Re-affirmation of the Freedom of the Borough for the Royal Welsh. The parade and subsequent reception was appreciated by all those in attendance whether participating or observing. Many letters of congratulation have been received praising the excellent organisation and delivery of this event.

The team also provide additional support to other events such as the Holocaust Memorial Day, Citizenship Awards and the Citizenship Ceremonies.

### 4.2.3 Overview & Scrutiny Support

The overall aim of the Overview & Scrutiny section is to "Support the Overview & Scrutiny process in enhancing democracy and improving public service delivery". The Overview & Scrutiny section provides members and the Local Service Board Scrutiny Panel with impartial research, support and advice in relation to the discharge of the Authority's scrutiny function. This includes:

- Assisting members with the review and analysis of policies, budgets and recommendations proposed by Cabinet.
- Assisting members with the development and implementation of Scrutiny Committee forward work programmes.
- Facilitation of Research & Evaluation investigations, including the development and implementation of project plans.

- Facilitation of the provision of external advice to Overview and Scrutiny Committees when necessary.
- Undertaking and commissioning independent research on behalf of Overview & Scrutiny Committees
- Development of bids to the Welsh Government's Scrutiny Development Fund in support of innovative scrutiny practice.

#### 4.2.4 Committees

The Committees Section co-ordinates and services the 18 formal committees of the Authority, 3 Joint Committees (Catalogue Supplies Service, Coychurch Crematorium Police Authority), School Admissions and Exclusions Appeals Panels, Scrutiny Research and Evaluation Panels and the Local Service Board Scrutiny Panel. This equates to over 200 meetings a year (244 meetings in 2011-12) for which they arrange suitable dates, prepare agendas, co-ordinate report approval, circulate documents, draft minutes, record decisions and attendances and publish appropriate information on the various websites.

The section also administrates the Council's Scheme of Delegation handling approximately 250 decisions a month and between 01 April 2011- 31 March 12 the section received, recorded and published 3420 delegated decisions.

#### 4.3 Key Support and Services - Internal Directorates and Departments

4.3.1 Much of the support provided to elected members is undertaken by other Departments and Directorates although the provision of this support is co-ordinated by the Democratic Services Team.

##### 4.3.2 Directorates and Departments

Support is provided by all Directorates and Departments to elected members primarily in the provision of reports to committees, addressing Member referrals, providing advice and managing the services delivered to the constituents represented by every councillor.

##### 4.3.3 Human Resources and Organisational Development

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Department provides significant support to Elected Members. They are responsible for facilitating the administration of Member Salaries, Car passes, ID cards, training opportunities and maintaining records as they would for employees of the Authority.

A very visible element of the support they provide to elected members is their assistance in the delivery of the member development programme and support for the achievement of the WLGA Charter for Member Support and Development. Further information regarding on the support provided in respect of member development is covered in a separate report.

##### 4.3.3 ICT Service Unit

The ICT Service Unit provides the equipment and infrastructure to enable members to interact electronically with the Authority and the public. The department is in the

process of "rolling out" ICT equipment to councillors to meet their individual requirements. Other elements of the support they provide includes:

- The provision of:
  - A number a dedicated PC's and a docking station installed in the members workroom
  - laptops to individual councillors to facilitate mobile working.
  - "secure cloud" facilities so that councillors can access their ICT accounts from their own PC's
  - Smart phones for Cabinet members
- Maintenance and support for ICT equipment and services provided by the Authority via the ICT service desk.
- Support for the electronic facilities installed in the Council Chamber

#### 4.4 Key Support and Services - External Providers

4.4.1 The Democratic Services team actively participates with other networks and organisations in the promotion of best practice. Many of these agencies are co-ordinated by the WLGA which provides a range of support services to assist with the development of elected members in Wales.

4.4.2 The Democratic Services team are active participants in the following WLGA networks:

- Member Support Officer (MSO)/Member Development Champions Network. These networks aims to improve the services and member development opportunities provided to councillors. The MSO is primarily for officers, with elected members forming the Member Development Champions Network. The two networks have joint meetings on a regular basis to share views and ideas.
- Regional and National Scrutiny Champions and Scrutiny Officers Networks. These networks are similar in make up to the other networks but assist with the development of overview & scrutiny in Wales including the provision of bespoke support for individual authorities and the production of publications.

#### 4.4.3 Wales Association of Civic Officers

The Wales Association of Civic Officers aims to represent and promote the issues of its members, encourage their professional development, and provide an effective and supportive forum through which to share skills and knowledge and to influence policy and practice nationally and locally in civic and ceremonial matters. Bridgend is currently the lead Authority with this organisation and is looking to progress its aims on an all-Wales basis.

#### 4.5 Service Challenges and Developments

##### 4.5.1 Integration of Democratic Services

The Democratic Services team is currently undertaking an integration process with the Scrutiny section in order to streamline working practices and to remove any duplication of effort. Further service improvements and developments are being planned which include the provision of an integrated software system that will

enable single entry updates for the full range of support mechanisms provided by the Democratic Services team.

4.5.2 The Local Government (Wales) Measure is still to be fully implemented with guidance awaited in respect of some areas of scrutiny and in the provision of remote working. The requirements of the measure will increase the resources required by the team to deliver the expected services and support. Improved service delivery has to be managed in order to meet the requirements of the Measure and to remain within the available budget.

#### 4.5.3 Scrutiny Development

Welsh Government recently announced a comprehensive programme of support for scrutiny development which includes the launch of a refreshed Scrutiny Development Fund aimed at supporting collaborative scrutiny projects. Opportunities for utilising this fund to develop scrutiny at a regional level with Bridgend being the lead authority are being developed.

#### 4.5.4 WAO Improvement Study

The Wales Audit Office is undertaking a study to reduce the variations in scrutiny performance across Wales and raise standards of scrutiny within individual Councils through a rigorous self-evaluation process and participation in peer review exercises involving the Scrutiny Chairs and the Cabinet Member for Resources. Bridgend is participating in this study to:

- evaluate the effectiveness of scrutiny in Bridgend using common criteria
- identify areas for improvement in strengthening the function
- facilitate the development of relationships between ourselves and other Councils within the region
- develop a robust model of scrutiny in Bridgend which reduces the level of regulatory fees paid by the Council to external auditors, inspectors and regulators.

### **5. Effect upon Policy Framework& Procedure Rules**

5.1 There is no effect on the Policy Framework and Procedure Rules.

### **6. Equality Impact Assessment**

6.1 There are no equalities implications in respect of this report.

### **7. Financial Implications**

7.1 All activities described in this report will be met from existing budget provisions.

### **8. Recommendation**

8.1 That the Democratic Services Committee notes the content of this report.

**Gary Jones**  
**Head of Democratic Services (Designate)**

19 October 2012

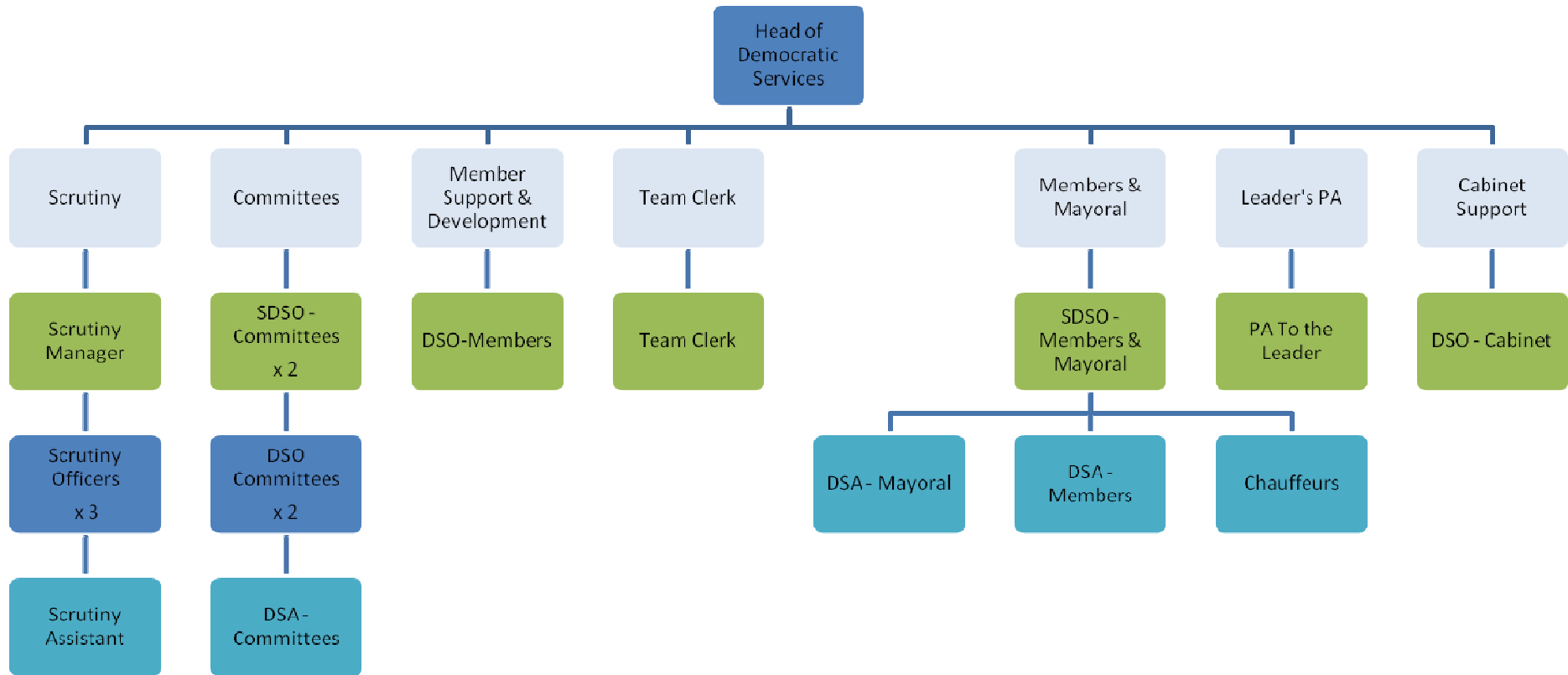
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**Background documents** – None

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES TEAM – STRUCTURE



**DEMOCRATIC SERVICES PROVIDED BY SECTION**

|   |
|---|
| <b>Committees</b>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Servicing Committee</li> <li>• Delegated Powers</li> <li>• Decision Records</li> <li>• Publication to the Intranet/Internet</li> <li>• Register of Gift &amp; Hospitality</li> <li>• Calendar of Meeting/Membermeetings</li> <li>• Register of Interests</li> <li>• Administration of Tenders</li> <li>• Forward Work Programme</li> </ul> |
| <b>Members and Mayoral</b>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support to the Mayor</li> <li>• Civic/Corporate Events</li> <li>• Member Referrals</li> <li>• Sealing of Documents</li> <li>• Member Administration and Secretarial Support</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Member Support &amp; Development</b>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members' Remuneration</li> <li>• Expenses</li> <li>• Outside Bodies</li> <li>• Member Zone</li> <li>• Member Development Administration</li> <li>• Publication to the Intranet/Internet</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Scrutiny</b>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support to the Scrutiny Committees</li> <li>• Research and Evaluation Panels</li> <li>• Scrutiny Timebank</li> <li>• LSB Scrutiny Panel</li> <li>• Engagement with the Public</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Team Clerk</b>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secretarial Support to the Team</li> <li>• Members Attendance</li> <li>• Council Suite Booking</li> <li>• Ordering and Purchasing</li> </ul>   |
| <b>PA to the Leader</b>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secretarial and Administrative Support to the Leader</li> <li>• Leaders Referrals</li> <li>• Liaison with Organisations</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Cabinet Support</b>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PA to the Deputy Leader</li> <li>• Secretarial and Administrative Support to Cabinet Members</li> <li>• Cabinet Member Referrals</li> </ul>  |