

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
REPORT TO THE DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE
13 JULY 2017

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 to Elected Members assists in the achievement of all the Corporate Priorities.

1. **Supporting a successful economy** – taking steps to make the county a good place to do business, for people to live, work, study and visit, and to ensure that our schools are focused on raising the skills, qualifications and ambitions of all people in the county.
2. **Helping people to be more self-reliant** – taking early steps to reduce or prevent people from becoming vulnerable or dependent on the Council and its services.
3. **Smarter use of resources** – ensuring that all its resources (financial, physical, human and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the development of resources throughout the community that can help deliver the Council's priorities.

3. Background

3.1 Role of the Democratic Services Committee

3.1.1 The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 requires the Authority at section 8 (1) to designate one of its officers to discharge the democratic services functions in section 9.

3.1.2 That duty is placed upon the Head of Democratic Services but it is the Democratic Services Committee who has the following functions:

- Exercise the function of the Local Authority under section 8(1)(a) (designation of Head of Democratic Services)
- Review the adequacy of provision by the Authority of staff, accommodation and other resources to discharge democratic services functions, and
- Make reports and recommendations to the Authority in relation to such provision

- 3.2 The Democratic Services Committee has an important role in advising the Head of Democratic Services particularly in relation to the provision of support for Members.
- 3.3 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.
- 3.4 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 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 number of diverse support services and liaises with internal departments for example the ICT Department and external agencies including the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) to provide the necessary support to enable elected members to undertake their role effectively.
- 4.2 Key Support and Services - Democratic Services Team
- 4.2.1 Support to Members, the Executive and the Mayor
- 4.2.2 Democratic Services provide a comprehensive administrative service to all Elected Members enabling them to fulfil their democratic role in their wards and as representatives of the Bridgend County Borough Council.
- 4.2.3 The Members Support section also provides specific support to the Mayor and the Civic Office, and administrative assistance to the Leader and Cabinet Members. Support includes:
- Management of the Elected Member referral system
 - Maintenance of Elected Member related web pages on the BCBC internet and intranet
 - Support for Elected Members in their constituency roles, liaising with local MP's & AM's, community councils, partner organisations, the public and chief officers on their behalf
 - Co-ordination of member development activities and production and delivery of member inductions
 - Administration and liaison with external organisations including reports to Council and Cabinet and the maintenance of records and correspondence
 - Support to the Mayor and Deputy Mayor to allow them to carry out their civic duties, which includes day to day management of the Mayoral diary and correspondence and organisation of corporate functions when necessary
 - Provision of an administrative support service to the Leader, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Members including processing their Elected Member referrals and liaison with other directorates, internal and external organisations and day to day management of the Leader, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Members' diaries, correspondence and telephone calls and appropriate research

- Administration of Elected Member remuneration, including processing and monitoring of claims, maintenance and implementation of the members' schedule of remuneration and liaison with payroll
- The co-ordination of the Council suite by internal and external customers
- Administration of members attendance at conferences, meetings courses and seminars

4.2.4 Member Referrals

4.2.5 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.

4.2.6 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. Further details on the Member referral system are included on the Service and Performance Update report later in the agenda.

4.2.7 Corporate and Civic Functions

4.2.8 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.

4.2.9 The most recent corporate event was the Mayor's Citizenship awards. The event was appreciated by all those in attendance whether participating or observing.

4.3 Overview & Scrutiny Support

4.3.1 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 Public 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

4.4 Committees

- 4.4.1 The Committees Section supports the Council's Committees and formal decision making processes. The section co-ordinates and services the 24 formal committees of the Authority, a Joint Committee (Coychurch Crematorium), School Admissions and Exclusions Appeals Panels and various Scrutiny Panels. The section also co-ordinates a number of informal or partnership meetings. This equates to over 200 meetings a year 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.
- 4.4.2 The Committees section also administrates the Council's Scheme of Delegation handling approximately 210 decisions a month or 2533 decisions per year. The section also provides quarterly Corporate Training in the administration of the Scheme of Delegation, and regular updates to the register of Gifts and Hospitality for Officers.
- 4.4.3 The section also co-ordinates the delivery of the webcasting facility for the Authority.

4.5 Key Support and Services - Directorates and Departments

- 4.5.1 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.
- 4.5.2 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.

4.5.3 ICT Service

The ICT Service provides the equipment and infrastructure to enable members to interact electronically with the Authority and the public. The department has "rolled out" the new ICT equipment to councillors. Other elements of the support they provide includes the provision of:

- A number of dedicated PC's and a docking station installed in the members workroom
- Maintenance and support for ICT equipment and services provided by the Authority via the ICT service desk
- Operation of the digital office
- Support for the electronic facilities installed in the Council Chamber

4.6 Key Support and Services - External Providers

- 4.6.1 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.

4.6.2 The Democratic Services team are active participants in the following WLGA and other 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.
- National, Regional and Local Networks for Modern.gov Users
The Modern.gov system provides a committee administration and management system which is used by over 290 Local Authorities, National parks and other authorities across the UK including the Welsh Government. The networks allow us to consider good working practices at all levels and identify suitable areas for development by Modern.gov which will provide additional efficiencies.

Feedback from these meetings is provided to the Democratic Services Committee where appropriate

4.7 Ongoing work of Democratic Services

4.7.1 Following the Local Government Elections the key tasks for Democratic Services team in the next 12 months include:

- Provide the highest possible level of support to Elected Members using the available resources
- Completion of Elected Member induction
- Determination and delivery of the Member Development Programme
- Review of the Member Referrals process
- Delivery of effective scrutiny using the new scrutiny model and undertaking a review in April 2018.

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
05 July 2017

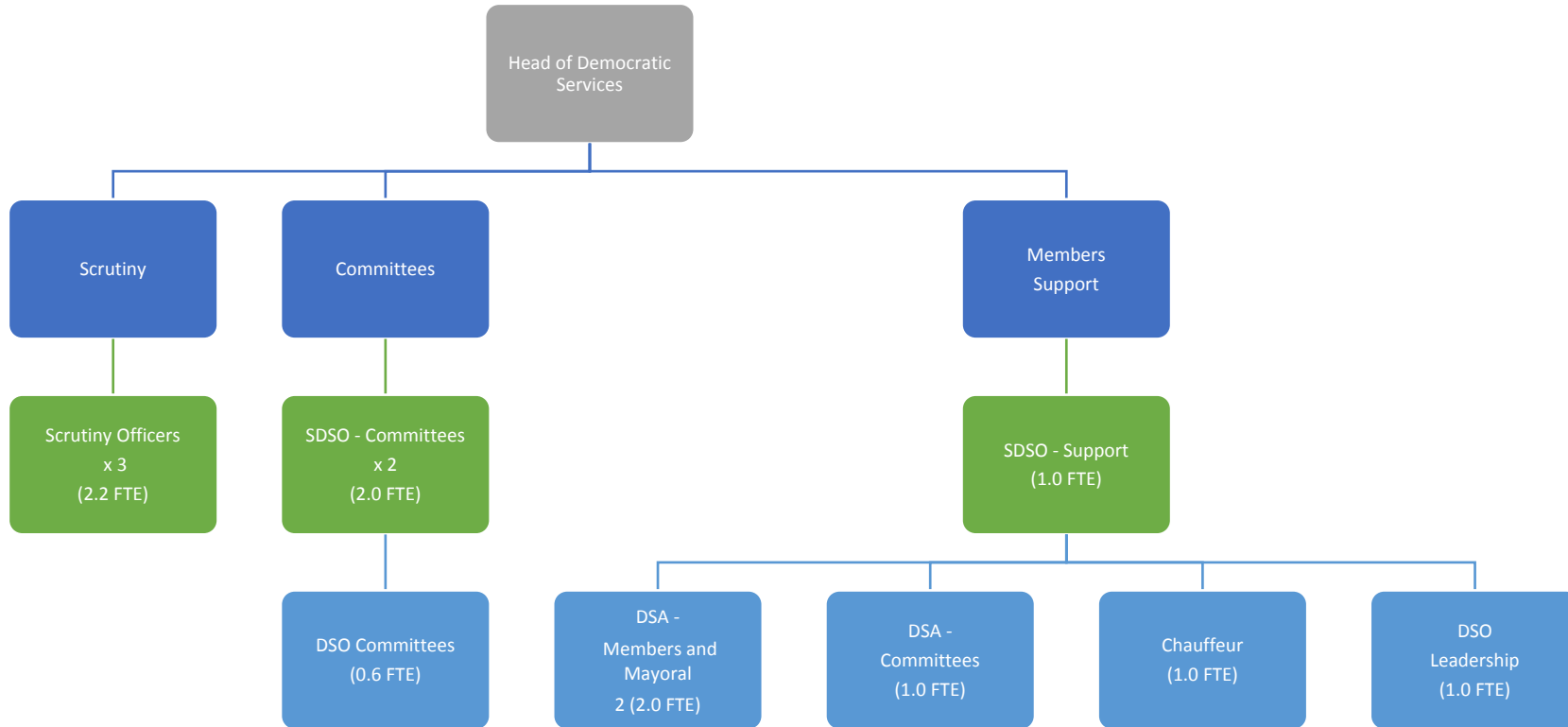
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Background documents – None

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES TEAM – STRUCTURE



- FTE - Full Time Equivalent
- DSA - Democratic Services Assistant
- DSO - Democratic Services Officer
- SDSO - Senior Democratic Services Officer