
Report To:	Policy & Resources Committee	Date:	14 September 2021
Report By:	Interim Head of Legal Services	Report No:	PR/15/21/AS
Contact Officer:	Anne Sinclair	Contact No:	01475 712710
Subject:	Members' Services Review		

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise the Committee of feedback received following the extended review of Members' support and to note that the staffing complement and resources meet the current scheme of expected tasks.

2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 The former Head of Legal & Property Services submitted a report to the meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee on 17 September 2019 regarding a review of Members' support. Following discussion the Committee requested that a review involving all Members be undertaken over the course of the following year with a further report to the September 2020 meeting of the Committee.
- 2.2 The subsequent report by the former Head of Legal & Property Services to the September 2020 Committee outlined the responses received from the all Members' consultation exercise, to which all Elected Members were invited to participate, concluded that the staffing complement and resources met the scheme of expected tasks detailed in the report of 17 September 2019. A copy of the Scheme of Tasks is set out in Appendix 1.
- 2.3 The decision of the Policy & Resources Committee on 17 September 2020 was that the feedback received from the all Members' consultation be noted and that approval be given to an extension of the review for one year to enable future planning of Members' resources as a consequence of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the ways of working affecting all staff and Members.
- 2.4 This report outlines the up-to-date responses received following the most recent all Members' consultation exercise.
- 2.5 It is recognised that with the continuation of the Covid-19 pandemic, and recovery from the pandemic there will be a significant impact on the resources required to manage and run the Local Government Election in May 2022. However, the existing staffing complement with current resources successfully managed to run the Scottish Government Election in May 2021 notwithstanding the additional challenges due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 2.6 It is the conclusion of the Interim Head of Legal Services that the existing staffing complement and resources meet the current scheme of expected tasks and that Members' Services will be in a position to liaise with the Council's ICT Services in relation to seeking IT support.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Committee:
- (i) Notes the feedback from the recent all Members consultation as set out in the body of this report; and
 - (ii) Agrees that the review of Members' Services is now concluded.

Anne Sinclair
Interim Head of Legal Services

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 At the meeting on 15 September 2020, the Committee approved an extension of the Members' Services review for a period of one year to enable future planning of Member resources as a consequence of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the ways of working affecting all staff and Members.
- 4.2 The consultation exercise prior to the September 2020 report received a 50% response rate (11 confidential returns). A copy of the questionnaire issued to Members in September 2020 is set out in Appendix 2. The response from those Elected Members who participated in the consultation exercise in 2020 was positive, although in relation to question 5 on any causes of concern and challenges during the Covid-19 pandemic, issues were raised relating to internet access, connectivity, robustness of Members home IT, home printing/copying facilities and difficulties in communicating while working from home. The majority of responders considered that the review should be extended for a period of one year to enable future planning of Members' resources.

5.0 RECENT ELECTED MEMBER FEEDBACK

- 5.1 The most recent consultation exercise received a 27% response rate (6 confidential returns). All Members were asked as part of the most recent consultation exercise for their up-to-date views. Members were provided with a list of the core tasks of Members' Services and provided with a copy of the original questionnaire form should they wish to provide an updated response.
- 5.2 Two Members chose to complete the original questionnaire form. All questions received a positive response from both of those Members. In relation to question 7 regarding tasks that were not part of the core tasks, one Member made a suggestion in relation to assistance with Agenda management.
- 5.3 Of the six Members who responded three Members made a request for support from Members' Services in liaising with colleagues in ICT with a view to obtaining equipment or making other arrangements to assist with home working. The Members' Services team will assist in this connection.
- 5.4 Two responders stated that they considered it would be appropriate for the review to be extended for a further period of one year in light of the current Covid-19 recovery and to enable future planning of Members' Services to take account of the "new normal" and potential for the Council's overall consideration of the new ways of working affecting all staff. However, all six responders were satisfied with the standard of support provided in relation to the core tasks and feel the current staffing complement and resources meet the requirements to cover the specified core tasks.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 Once again the feedback received from the consultation exercise has been positive and it is considered that no additional resources to undertake the current range of tasks are required at this time.
- 6.2 Whilst there was considerable pressure on resources in the lead up to and during the Scottish Parliament Electoral event, which was particularly challenging during the Covid-19 pandemic, the experience of the May 2021 Scottish Government Elections was positive. As always in times of additional pressure, such as an election, admin assistance is available from the remaining complement of Legal Services support staff.
- 6.3 A working group of Officers continues to review future practices in light of guidance from the Scottish Government in terms of future ways of working for staff and Members.
- 6.4 Resilience and cross skilling are evident within the Members' Services team and continues to be developed in order to ensure there is adequate and sufficient provision for planned and

unplanned absence.

- 6.5 Two Elected Members have made a request that this review is extended for a further period of one year. However all Members who responded to this review were satisfied with the current provision and resources. The Council is in the final year of its administration prior to the Local Government Elections in May 2022. In the circumstances it is not considered necessary to extend this review further. It will be open to Members to request a fresh review following the new administration in May 2022.

7.0 IMPLICATIONS

Finance

- 7.1 There are no direct financial implications.

Financial Implications:

One off Costs

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Years	Proposed Spend this Report	Virement From	Other Comments
N/A					

Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings)

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	With Effect from	Annual Net Impact		
N/A					

Legal

- 7.2 There are no direct implications within this report.

Human Resources

- 7.3 There are no direct implications within this report.

Equalities

- 7.4 Equalities

- (a) Has an Equality Impact Assessment been carried out?

	YES
X	NO – This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a substantive change to an existing policy, function or strategy. Therefore, no Equality Impact Assessment is required.

- (b) Fairer Scotland Duty

If this report affects or proposes any major strategic decision:-

Has there been active consideration of how this report's recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome?

	YES – A written statement showing how this report’s recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage has been completed.
X	NO

(c) Data Protection

Has a Data Protection Impact Assessment been carried out?

	YES – This report involves data processing which may result in a high risk to the rights and freedoms of individuals.
X	NO

Repopulation

7.5 None.

8.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

8.1 None.

EXTRACT OF MINUTE

Policy & Resources Committee: 17 September 2019

Agenda Item: 20

Subject: Review of Members' Support

5.2 The following administrative and secretarial services are provided by the Members' Services team to support all Elected Members and their individual roles as Councillors, Provost and Leader:

- PA support to Provost and Leader
- Arranging Civic events/hospitality/visits
- Arranging Surgeries
- Room booking service
- Support arrangements for Councillors' ICT
- Mail sorted, logged and mail posted
- Photocopying
- Word processing of Constituency and Council business (letters, e-mails, etc.)
- Telephone messages taken
- Travel and accommodation arrangements
- Meetings arranged
- Enquiries relayed to Council staff
- General information gathering including background research related to constituency matters
- Diary management if requested
- Training/Briefings organised
- Expenses claims processed

5.3 These duties are considered core and are consonant with the services and support provided by other Councils to their Elected Members.

REVIEW OF MEMBERS' SUPPORT

QUESTIONNAIRE

Completed by:

Date:

1. With reference to the core tasks listed in paragraph 5.2 of the Policy & Resources report 'Review of Members' Support', please provide comment on how satisfied you are with the standard of the support service provided in relation to the tasks?

Response:

2. Do you feel the current staff complement and resources meet the support provided to cover the specified core tasks?

Response:

3. Are individual tasks that you request carried out timeously and within your requested timescales?

Response:

4. Is the quality of work of a standard that you would expect?

Response:

5. Given the significant challenges experienced in maintaining continuity of service provision due to the current Covid-19 pandemic, are there any areas of your support that give you cause for concern?

Response:

6. During periods of pressure, for example scheduled/unscheduled electoral events, staff absences (holidays/sickness), has there been a significant impact on the direct support you receive?

Response:

7. To ensure that you receive the support you need to fulfil your role as a Councillor, are there any aspects of your workload that you feel would benefit with the assistance of the support team but are not part of the core tasks?

Response:

8. In the current Covid-19 recovery do you consider that the review be extended for one year to enable future planning of Member resources to take account of the 'New Normal' and the potential for the Council's overall consideration of the new ways of working affecting all staff?

Response:

9. **Any other comments:**

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE

Please return to:

Karen.Macvey@inverclyde.gov.uk

