

## 2011/12 Budget - Savings Proposal

**Service: Legal Services**

**Proposal Number:**

### Description of Proposal

Savings to be realised from the deletion of vacant posts, withdrawal of shift allowance and consolidation of posts as detailed below:

| <u>Post</u>  | <u>Band</u> | <u>Scale Point</u> | <u>Saving</u>   |
|--|-------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| Administrative Assistant (Dem Svs) (vacant)              | 3           | 16                 | £22,225         |
| Senior Democratic Services Officer (vacant)              | 6           | 27                 | £34,079         |
| Senior Democratic Services Officer (vacant)              | 6           | 27                 | £34,079         |
| Shift Allowance (Dem Svs)                                |             |                    | £22,833         |
| Administrative Assistant (min saving) (2 posts into 1)   | 2           | 10                 | £16,922         |
| Political Asst. reduce to 18hrs pw (currently full-time) | 6           | 32                 | £17,973         |
| Political Assistant (vacant)                             | 6           |                    | £15,231         |
| Member Services Post (4 posts into 3)                    | 5           |                    | £25,000         |
| Add election part time saving                            | 6           |                    | £7,186          |
| <b>Total Saving</b>                                      |             |                    | <b>£195,528</b> |

**Note:** The above savings include the savings arising out of the merger of the elections and democratic services teams and a reduction in staffing in Member Services. It does not include savings in Legal Services, including admin, as this needs further discussion with Directors.

### Proposed Saving

| Proposed Saving<br>in 2011/12 | Proposed Saving<br>in 2011/12 | Proposed<br>Saving in full<br>year | Proposed<br>Saving in full<br>year |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| £'000s                        | FTE Staff                     | £'000s                             | FTE Staff                          |
| £200                          | 6.4                           | £200                               | 6.4                                |

|                           | 2011/12<br>£'000s | Full Year<br>£'000s |
|---------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| <b>People</b>             | £200              | £200                |
| <b>Property</b>           |                   |                     |
| <b>Third Party</b>        |                   |                     |
| <b>Infrastructure/Kit</b> |                   |                     |

## Base Budget 2010/11

|   | £'000s         |
|---|----------------|
| <b>Expenditure</b>  |                |
| Employees   | 2105.1         |
| Other Direct Running Costs (Premises, Transport and Supplies)         | 357.0          |
| Third Party Payments  | 80.8           |
| Transfer Payments   | 0              |
| Capital Financing Costs   | 16.2           |
| Support Services Costs  | 3608.6         |
| <b>Gross Expenditure</b>  | <b>6167.7</b>  |
| <b>Income</b>   |                |
| Sales, Fees and Charges   | -235.5         |
| Grant and External Contributions                                      | 0              |
| Support Services Income   | -3208.2        |
| <b>Gross Income</b>   | <b>-3443.7</b> |
| <b>Net Expenditure</b>  | <b>2724.0</b>  |
| Base Budget 2010/11 Full time Equivalent Staff (Inc 4.7 Vertex staff) | 50.8           |

## Recent Changes to Base Budget

|   | £'000s |
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| Growth approved in the 2010/11 Base Budget  | 484.7  |
| Savings approved in the 2010/11 Base Budget | 168.1  |

**Impact of Proposal on public / services**

**Electoral Services**

Potential for shortage of office cover during annual holiday periods. There is a restriction on taking leave during the election period and therefore annual leave is taken in a peak during non election and non canvass times. Publicly this could impact on the electorate; telephone calls, emails, correspondence and registering electors. Statutory tasks may be at risk if not planned and resourced accurately. A reduction in staff could prevent timely processing of canvass forms. This could lead to reminder forms being sent out before the forms received in the office have been processed. This would have a budget impact as unnecessary reminder forms are printed, posted out and return postage paid and will likely result in increased telephone queries and complaints

A merger with Democratic Services will provide a solution to this. The Service will need to ensure effective integration.

**Democratic Services**

On occasion, it has not been possible to provide sufficient office cover to enable telephone calls, e-mails and other correspondence (from the public, councillors and other stakeholders) to be dealt with in a timely manner, thus leading to complaints. This situation could be exacerbated with the expectation that staff take on an additional workload during the year in respect of elections. The opportunity for joint-working with the Elections Team could mitigate some of these potential issues.

The Elections Manager will provide additional capacity to Democratic Services work. This will mitigate the potential impact of delays in responsiveness and ability to cover competing priorities that could arise.

The services currently offered to local schools to support School Admission Appeals, and which are subject to SLAs, may well have to be restricted due to potential capacity issues resulting from increased workloads. The peak period of appeals usually runs from June to September (with a break from hearings during the school holidays).

Any failure to provide effective advice and support to the democratic process through the Council's decision-making and Overview & Scrutiny arrangements can lead to a breakdown of the process, resulting in delays and the potential for inaccurate decisions to be recorded and actioned. Furthermore, the potential consequences of this are:

- Delayed judgements/decisions.

- Potential for ill informed or incorrect decisions
- Increased likelihood of Monitoring Officer intervention
- Officer / member tensions
- Negative Press for the Council
- Damage to reputation

It is therefore important that both the number and timing of committee meetings should be reviewed in order to ensure that coverage can be provided from within the wider team and that there is no conflict between the “core” democratic and elections workloads. A combined electoral and democratic risk strategy will provide contingency plans in the event of conflict.

The expectations of Councillors in respect of the level and nature of service delivery will have to be managed in order to avoid dissatisfaction with the services being provided.

Report deadlines should be enforced corporately, as this can lead to less time being available to staff to undertake checking, thus increasing the potential for error. A merged service will however provide additional proofing capacity for Democratic Services.

In addition, forward planning should clearly identify and inform both priorities and workloads. This should avoid the increasing propensity for arrangements for meetings to be put in place, only to be cancelled and re-arranged and thus causing a duplication of effort that currently affects the timeliness of service delivery.

Potentially the shared election and democratic services administrative role has the potential to encompass a wider range of tasks which although not of increased complexity, will provide more job satisfaction and interest.

#### **Member Services**

A reduction in staff in Member Services will require Members to utilise all available staff irrespective of designation of post or perceived political affiliation particularly during periods of reduction in staff due to sickness or annual leave.

#### **Legal Services**

Previously legal services has been able to call on the services of the admin assistants in both electoral and democratic services; this overflow facility will be restricted. However staff in member services should be able to assist with overflow work being carried out on behalf of legal.

see business continuity note below

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|  | <p><b>Registrar - none</b></p> <p><i><b>Business Continuity</b> - All Legal Services staff will be required to provide additional support outside their usual business area during peak times or where there is a significant loss of staff (Business Continuity Scenario) to reduce any impact on public/services</i></p> |
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| <p><b>Impact of Proposal on performance</b></p> | <p><b>Electoral Services</b></p> <p>Preparation for the annual canvass begins each July and the canvass commences in August. This may be delayed but not overtly affected if a reduction in staff occurs. The accuracy of the register will be reduced if fewer households return their forms due to a shortened window for their action.</p> <p>Election tasks undertaken following the election may be delayed. Preparation for a combined election/referendum in 2011 may be delayed.</p> <p>Senior officers may be required to undertake administrative tasks in order to complete the annual canvass and meet the election deadlines. Tasks previously delegated will be undertaken by Senior Staff, leading to initial capacity issues.</p> <p>There may be a reduction in performance indicator for the return of the annual canvass form if tasks, such as manual checking of non responders, cannot be undertaken due to a reduction in staff resources. This will affect the accuracy of the Electoral Register and lead to complaints at Election time.</p> <p>A merger with Democratic Services should provide a solution to this.</p> <p><b>Democratic Services</b></p> <p>With an increase in both workloads and competing priorities, there exists a greater potential for deadlines to be compromised and thus performance being detrimentally affected. At worst, this could mean that statutory deadlines regarding the publication of agenda are missed and committee meetings being cancelled as a result.</p> <p>Management will need to strictly manage staff and enforce the timeframe for the publication of minutes of meetings. Additional elections-related work if brought into the team could add an additional pressure but also provide capacity. Responsiveness to correspondence and ad hoc requests from Members will add to competing priorities and could lead to the potential for increased complaints.</p> |
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|  | <p>A merger with Electoral Services will add additional capacity for both teams if true joint working is achieved.</p> <p><b>Member Services</b><br/> There is potential for a positive impact on performance if the remaining personnel are acceptable to all the parties. The positive impact of the change in provision could be</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• closer working relationships between Members,</li> <li>• reduction in duplication of work</li> <li>• clarity of roles and</li> <li>• a more focused and streamlined service delivery from officers.</li> </ul> <p><b>Legal Services</b> - <i>none</i></p> <p><b>Registrar</b> - <i>none</i></p> |
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| <p><b>Impact of Proposal on staff</b></p> | <p>There will be staff redundancies as set out in page 1.</p> <p><b>Electoral Services</b><br/> Restricting annual leave to outside peak periods is difficult and undertaken with the goodwill of staff. This will still need to be carefully managed.</p> <p><b>Democratic Services</b><br/> Team members who regularly attend evening meetings currently work to a system that comes within the additional hours and irregular working policy (rota hours that attract a 10% premium on their basic salary). This was approved as no other alternatives were available that ensured staff could work within this policy without being detrimentally affected and disadvantaged.</p> <p>The proposal to remove the 10% uplift will require full consultation and the subsequent completion of an amendment to contract form for each employee. An alternative method of working will also have to be devised to ensure that the working requirements of the service do not cause particular and regular disadvantage to staff, and crucially, this will have to be compliant with the HR policies of the Council.</p> <p>A reduction in the establishment of the team, who are available to undertake the “core” democratic services functions of the Council, has been anticipated with plans having been implemented to address this and ensure coverage of meetings. However, all staff have an entitlement to annual leave and absence due to ill-health or</p> |
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|  | <p>maternity/paternity provisions. In such instances, the capacity of the team could become strained but additional office capacity arising from the elections team will alleviate short term issues. Staff will be required to learn a new IT Election system which is extremely user friendly. This additional capacity will assist the Elections Team but not add a substantial resource implication to Democratic Services.</p> <p>Both managers will need to work together to ensure effective communication of duties assigned to the administrative support and ensure their competing priorities do not conflict.</p> <p>A reduction of 10% of salary coupled with increased workload, less flexibility when annual leave is able to be taken and taking on additional tasks in relation to elections, may cause morale and other issues amongst staff which are, at this stage, unable to be determined.</p> <p><b>Member Services</b><br/> Remaining staff will benefit from clarity and definition of role. There will be opportunities for staff development within their roles. Remaining staff will gain exposure to other working practices by adding/receiving support in the greater Legal service and it is envisaged that this will have a positive impact on morale and working practices.</p> <p><b>Legal Services</b><br/> Flexible workforce required to add additional support to reduced Democratic &amp; Electoral Services and Member Services.</p> <p><b>Registrar- none</b></p> |
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| <p><b>Practical requirements regarding implementation and timetable</b></p> | <p><b>Electoral Services</b><br/> The impending combined Referendum and Election in May 2011 requires an element of stability in order to allocate tasks and implement the changes offered in the Election Review.</p> <p>There is a risk involved in physically moving staff and equipment during the canvass and election period. The planning involved would need to be factored into the election plan.</p> <p><b>Democratic Services</b><br/> In order to achieve an element of the savings proposed, alternative working arrangements are required to be identified, consulted upon and agreed before the end of the current financial year. Any solution must be covered by and contained</p> |
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|                                 | <p>within approved HR policies.</p> <p>Moving away from a rota system to an, as yet unspecified alternative, may re-introduce the ability for staff to claim flexi-time and overtime. This could lead to an additional pressure as staff seek to discharge any accrual of hours within a 6-week period, as opposed to the more flexible approach at present.</p> <p>There will be a training and development requirement in respect of elections to ensure that this is not detrimental to the stability being sought by and the quality of services provided by the Elections Team. Training will not be required prior to implementation and will be provided on a 1-2-1 basis and as accessible, with the available budget.</p> <p>In the period up to implementation of the savings proposals, the following will be required to considered and addressed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The expectations of Councillors, and indeed Senior Officers, in respect of the level and nature of service delivery available will have to be addressed and managed.</li> <li>• The number and timing of committee meetings will also have to reconsidered to avoid either a disproportionate accrual of hours by staff that cannot be discharged, a lack of office cover, or, at worst, an inability to provide cover to a meeting.</li> <li>• Report deadlines should be enforced corporately, as this can lead to less time being available to staff to undertake checking, thus increasing the potential for error.</li> </ul> <p><b>Member Services</b><br/>The current Leader's PA's contract ends in February 2011. This is in place to enable a pilot "caseworker" post. It would be most practical to have any restructure of the service completed prior to the end of the PA's contract.</p> <p><b>Legal Services - none</b></p> <p><b>Registrar - none</b></p> |
| <p><b>Equalities Impact</b></p> | <p>These will be addressed as part of the consultation process that will be undertaken with staff in respect of the savings proposals identified and their possible implications.</p>  |