
Report To:	Policy and Resources Committee	Date:	15 September 2020
Report By:	Head of Legal and Property Services	Report No:	LP/093/20
Contact Officer:	Gerard Malone	Contact No:	01475 712710
Subject:	Review of Members' Support		

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise the Committee of the feedback received from the consultation exercise on Members' support and to seek the approval of the Committee to extend the review for one year.

2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Head of Legal and Property Services submitted a report to the 17 September 2019 meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee on a review of Members' support. Following discussion, the Committee asked that a review involving all Members be undertaken over the course of the next year and that a report be submitted to the September 2020 meeting of the Committee.
- 2.2 This report outlines the responses received from the consultation exercise to which all Elected Members were invited to complete and submit.
- 2.3 It is my conclusion that the staffing complement and resources meet the current scheme of expected tasks as detailed in the report of 17 September 2019, and is resilient for all reasonably forecast normal circumstances. Although the period the consultation covered included the COVID-19 pandemic with significant pressures on the support service, nevertheless, there has been a positive response to the support provided.
- 2.4 It is anticipated and acknowledged that with the continuation of the COVID-19 pandemic, there will be a significant impact on the resources required to manage and run the Scottish Parliamentary Election in May 2021.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Committee:

- 3.1 notes the feedback received from the all Members' consultation as set out in the body of this report; and
- 3.2 approves the review be extended for 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.

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 At the meeting of 17 September 2019, the Committee approved a review involving all Members be undertaken over the course of the next year and that a report be submitted to the September 2020 meeting of the Committee
- 4.2 A consultation exercise in the form of a questionnaire was circulated to all Members accompanied by a copy of the original Policy and Resources report on the Review of Members' Support.

5.0 ELECTED MEMBER FEEDBACK

- 5.1 The consultation exercise received a 50% response rate (11 confidential returns). The responses to each question are summarised as follows:
- Question 1 on the standard of support service provided in relation to the core tasks received positive responses.
 - Question 2 on the current resources and staff complement in relation to the requirements of the core tasks received positive responses. Comment was made on the comparison of level of support to MPs and MSPs and impact on staffing levels during electoral events.
 - Question 3 on individual tasks and timescales received positive responses and comments.
 - Question 4 on the quality and standard of work received positive responses.
 - Question 5 on any causes for concern on the challenges during the current COVID-19 pandemic, received positive responses with no concern on the direct support provided but concerns on issues relating to internet access/connection, robustness of Members' home IT, provision of home printing/copying facilities, mail deliveries and the difficulty in communicating while working from home.
 - Question 6 on the impact during periods of pressure on the direct support provided were generally positive however highlighted the impact electoral events have on the available support and resources.
 - Question 7 on assistance with tasks that are not part of the core tasks, the majority of responders did not feel they required any additional support and reference was made to assistance that is provided in areas which are not necessarily part of the core tasks. Members who provided relevant suggestions included assistance with case management and informal regular meetings with the political group.
 - Question 8 asked whether the review should be extended for one year, eight responders stated that it would be appropriate for the review to be extended including one responder suggesting a shorter review period.
 - Question 9 asked for any other comments and of the responses received, all were highly complimentary of the support staff.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The feedback received from the consultation exercise has been positive and it is considered that no additional resources for the current range of tasks are required at this time.
- 6.2 The majority of responders considered 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. It is therefore suggested that a further review involving all Members be submitted to the September 2021 meeting of the Committee.

- 6.3 Resilience and cross skilling within the team has been consistently developed in order to ensure there is provision for planned and unplanned absences. Additionally, in times of pressure, administrative assistance is available from the remaining complement of Legal and Property Services support staff and this would be utilised dependent on circumstances to deal with any unforeseen eventualities. However, it is acknowledged that there is considerable pressure on resources in the lead up to and during electoral events. With the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the additional measures that will be required to manage and run the next scheduled electoral event in May 2021, options will be investigated on the measures to be put in place to ensure there is provision of appropriate staffing and resource levels to support Members during the upcoming election and any unscheduled electoral events. This could also involve requesting support staff from other Directorates of the Council.
- 6.4 In terms of the impact of COVID-19 on the future ways of working for staff and members, a working group of officers has been established with the chair being the Corporate Director Environment, Regeneration and Resources and this will review working practices for the future.

7.0 IMPLICATIONS

Finance

- 7.1 There are no direct financial implications.

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?

X

YES

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?

X

YES – A written statement showing how this report's recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage has been completed.

NO

- (c) Data Protection

Has a Data Protection Impact Assessment been carried out?

X

YES – This report involves data processing which may result in a high risk to the rights and freedoms of individuals.

NO

Repopulation

7.5 None.

8.0 CONSULTATIONS

8.1 A consultation questionnaire was sent to all Elected Members of the Council. The CMT has endorsed this report

9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

9.1 None.