

**REPORT TO Executive**

**Date of Meeting: 14 April 2015**

**Report of: Corporate Manager, Democratic & Civic Support, Electoral Registration Officer and Returning Officer**

**Title: STAFFING WITHIN THE ELECTORAL SERVICES TEAM**

**Is this a Key Decision?**

No

**Is this an Executive or Council Function?**

**Council**

**1. What is the report about?**

1.1 This report sets out a proposal to create a permanent member of staff within the Electoral Services team (to replace a temporary member of staff) to assist with the increased workload associated with the introduction of Individual Electoral Registration.

**2. Recommendations:**

2.1 That the Council be recommended to agree the permanent increase in the establishment of the Electoral Services Team, by the appointment of an additional post of Electoral Services Assistant.

**3. Reasons for the recommendation:**

3.1 As had always been suspected, the introduction of Individual Electoral Registration (IER), has brought about a large increase in the workload of the Electoral Services Team.

3.2 To this end, a temporary member of staff was appointed for a two year period, during which time, the full impact of the new legislative requirement could be assessed. This temporary contract was to run until 30<sup>th</sup> April 2016, and is being funded from the additional ring-fenced grant from the Government to assist with the transitional arrangements associated with IER, as well as from a reduction in the casual staff budget.

3.3 The current postholder has tendered her resignation with effect from 31 May 2015, and it is felt that sufficient evidence of additional workload has been seen to warrant this temporary post being made permanent.

**4. What are the resource implications including non financial resources.**

4.1 There are no additional resource implications associated with this proposal.

**5. Section 151 Officer comments:**

5.1 There are no additional financial implications associated with this decision as:-

- The Council is set to receive more grant funding to assist with the transitional arrangements associated with the introduction of IER and this can be used to offset some of these costs;
- This additional permanent member of staff within the team, will reduce the current reliance on the use of casual staff at peak times in the electoral registration and elections annual timetable.

## **6. What are the legal aspects?**

- 6.1 The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 places the responsibility on the Council to introduce IER and to ensure that sufficient staffing resources are in place to do so.

## **7. Monitoring Officer's comments:**

- 7.1 This report raises no issues for the Monitoring Officer.

## **8. Report details:**

- 8.1 The introduction of IER has increased the workload in the Electoral Services team due to the requirement for all electors to individually apply to be on the electoral register, rather than this being done on a household basis as was previously the case.
- 8.2 Not only does this mean that approximately 90,000 electors in Exeter have to apply, they also have to supply their date of birth and national insurance number so that their identity can be confirmed with the Department of Work and Pensions.
- 8.3 Whilst approximately 80% of applicants are confirmed immediately, the remaining 20% have to either be chased to provide their information (approximately 12,000 home visits were made in the Autumn of 2014), or they have to provide some other form of information to confirm their identity.
- 8.4 Whilst the initial stages of registration can be done on-line (and there has been a relatively successful take-up of this), all other stages have to be done manually thereby increasing the workload of the team quite considerably in both volume and complexity.
- 8.5 On introduction of the new legislation, the Government was aware of the initial increase in workload this would bring to Councils and provided grants to each to assist with the transition to the new arrangements. This grant was particularly to cover the costs associated with the printing and postage of all the necessary forms, the door to door canvassing which would be needed as well as additional staffing. A similar grant has been achieved for 2015/16 with uncertainty remaining as to whether additional funding would be available beyond the current year.
- 8.6 In an attempt to assist with the increased workload within the team, a temporary fixed term two year post created until April 2016.
- 8.7 The experiences associated with the introduction of IER have been what were expected, and are considered to be the way in which electoral registration will continue

in the future. As such, it is therefore requested, that the establishment of the Electoral Services team be permanently increased by one full time member of staff. The costs of this would be in the region of £20,000 per annum (including on-costs).

- 8.8 It is anticipated that due to this permanent member of staff being in the team, a lesser reliance will be placed on the use of casual staff at times of high demand in the team, thereby reducing the need for appropriate budgetary provision in this respect.
- 8.9 There should, therefore, be minimal additional costs to the Council to meet this statutory requirement due to the additional grant being received, and the reduction in the use of casual staff.

**9. How does the decision contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan?**

- 9.1 This decision will help ensure that efficient and effective delivery of services is maintained.

**10. What risks are there and how can they be reduced?**

- 10.1 If appropriate staffing resources were not provided to carry out this responsibility, the Council could find itself being legally challenged which could invalidate election results in the City thereby incurring additional costs if they had to be re-run.

**11. What is the impact of the decision on equality and diversity; health and wellbeing; safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults, community safety and the environment?**

- 11.1 The legislation ensures that the ability to register to vote is made available to all aspects of society, including those who are disadvantaged. Appropriate levels of staffing are therefore required to undertake these responsibilities.

**12. Are there any other options?**

- 12.1 Not that are considered appropriate bearing in mind the statutory responsibilities placed on the authority.

**John Street**  
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**Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 (as amended)**  
**Background papers used in compiling this report:-**

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