

<b>Report to</b>	Democratic Services Committee
<b>Date of meeting</b>	24 March 2023
<b>Head of Service</b>	Lisa Jones, Interim Head of Legal and Democratic Services
<b>Report author</b>	Steve Price, Democratic Services Manager
<b>Title</b>	Resources for Scrutiny

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

1.1. This report outlines changes to the support arrangements for the Scrutiny function.

## **2. What is the reason for making this report?**

2.1. Local authorities are required to have a Democratic Services Committee to oversee the democratic services of the Council.

## **3. What are the Recommendations?**

3.1. That the Committee notes the issues raised in the report and comments accordingly.

## **4. Report details**

4.1. Under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 the Democratic Services Committee has a role in reviewing 'the adequacy of provision by the authority of staff, accommodation and other resources to discharge democratic services functions'.

4.2. The Committee's role is linked to the Head of Democratic Services' role which includes

- promoting the role of the Scrutiny committees;
- providing support and advice to the scrutiny committees and the members of those committees; and
- providing support and advice in relation to the Scrutiny committees to other members of the Council; to the Cabinet and to officers.

- 4.3 Prior to the 'Democratic Services Efficiency Review' of 2010 the Council employed 2 full time Scrutiny officers and this was reduced to 1 post by the Review.
- 4.4 The resourcing of Scrutiny in Denbighshire was considered in the Wales Audit Office's (now Audit Wales) June 2018 report '*Overview and Scrutiny – fit for the Future? – Denbighshire County Council*'. The Wales Audit Office praised the Council's Scrutiny function but recommended that the Council:
- 'Review the adequacy of support arrangements, in terms of both the amount and type of support that overview and scrutiny committees may need'*.
- 4.5 Scrutiny committees often need to use reviews and task and finish group work to scrutinise issues that are too complex to be tackled solely by a 'report to committee' approach. These can be very resource intensive and may involve working with partner organisations and other external participants.
- 4.6 The scale and complexity of joint and regional governance arrangements have grown over recent years. These include the joint Public Services Board (for which there is a joint Scrutiny Committee), the North Wales Growth Deal (administered by the Ambition North Wales partnership of local authorities and educational institutions), the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee (currently with strategic transportation and strategic planning roles) and the North Wales regional school improvement joint consortium GwE.
- 4.7 The Council has recognised the need to return to its 2010 position of having two Scrutiny Officers and Karen Evans has now been appointed to join Rhian Evans as a Scrutiny Co-ordinator.

## **5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Plan 2022 to 2027: The Denbighshire We Want?**

- 5.1. This report does not directly contribute to the Corporate Plan.

## **6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?**

- 6.1. Support costs for the Scrutiny function are included within existing budgets.

## **7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?**

7.1. A Well-being Impact Assessment is not required for this report.

## **8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?**

8.1. None. This report is for the Committee's information.

## **9. Chief Finance Officer Statement**

9.1. Not required.

## **10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?**

10.1 The Council has addressed the risks identified by the Wales Audit Office by reviewing the adequacy of the support arrangements for Scrutiny.

## **11. Power to make the decision**

11.1. Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011