

By: Head of Democratic Services and Local Leadership
To: Selection and Member Services Committee – 4 July 2008
Subject: Additional Resources for the Civic Office – Legal and Democratic Services
Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: Approval is sought for additional resources in the Civic Office to support the work of the Lord Lieutenant and the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the County Council. The Civic Officer is due to return from maternity leave in August this year on a part-time basis. It is recommended that an additional full time Civic Officer is appointed, resulting in a net increase in staffing resources of 0.5 FTE at Grade KS8 (£15,700)

Background

1. (1) In 2003 the former Chief Executive and former Leader agreed, in consultation with the Lord-Lieutenant, to the establishment of a Civic Office to provide a co-ordinated support service to the Chairman of the County Council and the Lord-Lieutenant. It was agreed at the time that the Civic Office would comprise 2 full-time members of staff – Head of Civic Office (originally Staff Officer to the Chairman) and a new post of Civic Officer. The Civic Officer would be of sufficient seniority to be able not only to act as the Head of Civic Office's assistant but also to deputise for her in her absence. Whilst this was agreed as a policy position at the time, Members should be aware that there is no obligation on the Council to provide services to the Lord Lieutenant.

(2) The Civic Office is the principal mechanism for supporting the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and the Lord-Lieutenant and has, since its inception in 2003, grown significantly to warrant an additional resource to meet the ever increasing demands placed on this office.

County Council Chairmen

2. (1) Since 2003, the Civic Officer has worked with various Chairmen, all of whom have brought different ideals/expectations to the office, together with increasing workloads. The number of events hosted by successive Chairmen and organised by the Civic Office has grown steadily from 10 in 2004/05 to over 40 in 2007/08. During the Chairmanship of Mr Ridings, County Council buffet lunches in the Darent Room were re-introduced, together with a wide range of lunchtime and evening engagements. The Civic Office was also asked by the Leader and Chief Executive's Offices to host events which had not been held before, such as lunch for the Black and Minority Achievement Award winners, lunch for the Kent Award winner and a large Charity Dinner at Turkey Mill.

(2) This was by far the busiest year in the Civic Office to date and looks to have set the trend for future years, with the next Chairman and Vice-Chairman keen to keep up the momentum of raising the profile of the office and making it more visible to the community and of value in terms of raising the profile of the County Council.

(3) The current Chairman already has a busy calendar of events and is planning to host a mix of sit down lunches as well as buffet lunches on County Council days. There are already 11 events booked for the coming year, in addition to the County Council lunches. This is set to increase with a possibility of another Charity Dinner, various lunches plus helping the Events Office manage the CPA Garden parties which are being held in July. The Chairman is also very keen to change the format for the Poppy Appeal Launch and lunch. This will increase the size of the event quite significantly and will generate a great deal of work for the Civic Office in co-ordinating these proposed changes.

Lord-Lieutenant

3. (1) The Head of the Civic Office dedicates 100% of her time to supporting the Lord-Lieutenant, the Vice Lord-Lieutenant and 63 Deputy Lieutenants. In recent years, the workload has become such that the Head of the Civic Office cannot meet the demands of the Lieutenancy within her contracted hours.

(2) Since becoming Lord-Lieutenant back in 2002, Allan Willett has taken it upon himself to completely modernise the Lieutenancy to make it more relevant to as wide a range of people as possible. A number of formal, ceremonial events have continued, but the modernisation process has also involved the Lieutenancy reaching out to the whole community through a series of targeted visits, official openings, tours etc, that seek to recognise achievements and excellence in our communities. Examples of this include 'Community Visits' to different areas around the County, meeting volunteers, young people and Service personnel (including close liaison with the cadet units); presenting The Queen's Awards for Enterprise and The Queen's Awards for Voluntary Service (which also involves helping with the assessment of nominations and encouraging nominations).

Royal Visits

4. (1) It is also the case that Royal Visits have been on the increase over the last few years, as shown below.

2003 – 6 visits
2004 – 9 visits
2005 – 10 visits
2006 – 15 visits
2007 – 12 visits

(2) 2008 is looking set to be another good year, with 7 Royal Visits planned for the first half of the year already. Each Royal Visit will involve the Civic Office working closely with the organisers at each venue to draw up their

programme and giving advice as appropriate in relation to civic involvement, press and protocol issues. The Civic Office is the point of contact, working on behalf of the Royal Office and the Lord Lieutenant, on all aspects of the visit for the organisers. This will start with the initial planning meeting, liaison with the police and other agencies, working through to the "recce" with the Personal Protection Officer and finally, to the actual day of the visit.

(3) All Royal Households tend to work slightly differently and take different approaches to the planning arrangements. It is down to the Civic Office to ascertain these different working practices and to follow through accordingly.

(4) The sense of pride and excitement that a Royal Visit creates within the community is significant and there are also positive benefits accruing to the reputation of the County Council as organisers of these visits.

Lieutenancy Engagements

5. (1) The figures for Lieutenancy engagements have steadily grown over the years. These are engagements taken on by both the Lord-Lieutenant and his Deputies. Records are only available from 2005 and are as follows:

2005 - 220 fixtures
2006 - 410
2007 - 518

(2) It is anticipated that 2008 will far exceed the figure for 2007 with many more events taking place and some large scale, County-wide events, such as the TA 100 Service in Canterbury, generating more work for the Civic Office to deal with.

(3) Each fixture is administered through the Civic Office. Once an invitation has been received, either for the Lord Lieutenant or his Deputy, the Civic Office will seek to find the most appropriate representative. Once a representative has been secured, letters of confirmation will be sent to both the organisation and the Deputy Lieutenant confirming the necessary details. The Civic Office will ensure the Lord Lieutenant and the Deputies are fully briefed on what they should be doing and where and for how long they will be present at each engagement. Sometimes, the Deputy Lieutenant can be put in to direct contact with the organisation itself to sort out any finer details, if this is their preference. However, there are a large number of Deputies, including the Vice Lord Lieutenant, who rely heavily on the Civic Office to establish the detail they will need. Thank you letters are then sent, from the Civic Office, to all the Deputies, following their attendance at each event.

Civic Office Resources

6. (1) As a direct result of the significant increase in workload, as described above, the existing office resource of 2 full time staff is insufficient to meet both existing and projected demand. This increasing imbalance in demand and resources could begin to have an effect on the quality of the services offered, which will ultimately have adverse implications for the

reputation of the offices of the Lord-Lieutenant, the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the County Council and KCC corporately.

(2) Between them, the Head of the Civic Office and the Civic Officer regularly work up to 40 hours per month over and above their contracted hours. The Council's rules on flexi time mean that both officers have "lost" hours worked in previous months and are not able to always take flexi leave in order to reduce their credited hours because of the demands on the office. The payment of overtime to these officers is possible, but not entirely appropriate given the regularity of the additional work that they are being asked to support.

(3) The permanent Civic Officer is due to return from maternity leave in August of this year and intends to exercise her right to return on a part-time basis. Accordingly, an additional part-time post would have had to be appointed to in any event, merely to maintain the status quo. However, it is considered that there is a strong business case to appoint an additional civic officer on a permanent, full-time basis, after August, which would mean a net increase in resources for the Civic Office of 0.5 FTE at grade KS8, at an estimated cost including on-costs of £15,700.

(4) The Council does not currently receive a contribution from the Lord Lieutenant's Office to help cover the cost of providing services to him. If the Committee is supportive of the request to increase the resource in the Civic Office, the Council could seek a contribution from the Lord Lieutenant, accordingly. Failing or in addition to that, it is possible that this additional cost can be funded by the existing Members' Services budget, which was underspent by approximately £82,500 in 2007/08. However, the overall Democratic Services budget came in on line last year because of a similar level of overspend in the Secretariat. Accordingly, any increase in the Members Services budget to accommodate the additional cost of running the Civic Office will almost certainly lead to an overspend in the Democratic Services and Local Leadership budget in 2008/09 and future years unless the Council agrees to provide additional funding in the budget process.

(5) Subject to this Committee's approval of the proposal, a recruitment process will be organised as soon as possible in order to appoint to the additional post.

(6) There are a number of office accommodation changes already planned to take place along the Chairman's corridor. The office that the Civic Office is due to move into will be large enough to accommodate an additional person.

Conclusion

7. It is not sustainable for the Civic Office to continue at the current level of working for the foreseeable future. The delivery and effectiveness of this office in support of the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Lord-Lieutenant is crucial and must not in any way diminish. If we are to maintain and further enhance the high standards of this office then the proposed increase in staffing resources needs to be addressed to ensure that service delivery and KCC's reputation is not jeopardised in any way.

Recommendation

8. The Committee is recommended to agree that an additional, full time, permanent Civic Officer is appointed when the Civic Officer returns from maternity leave on a part-time basis in August 2008; the estimated additional cost of this revised staffing arrangement is £15,700, including on-costs, per annum.

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Background Information: