

Service Resources – Strategy & Innovation and Legal & Democratic Services

Report of the Finance Portfolio Holder

Recommended:

- 1. That the following changes be made to the Council's Establishment.**
 - A Project Support Officer post, in the Strategy & Innovation Service, be created for a two-year period
 - That the vacant Electoral Services Assistant post (50823967) be increased from 18.5 hours to 37 hours per week on a permanent basis
- 2. That the funding for the posts be approved, as set out in section 7 of the report.**

SUMMARY:

- The report explains the need and sets out proposals for increased resource requirement across two service areas.
 - Projects & Innovation Team – Strategy & Innovation Service
 - Elections Team – Legal & Democratic Service

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report brings forward proposals for additional resources within the Strategy & Innovation Service and the Legal & Democratic Service.

2 Background

- 2.1 The Council has an approved Establishment which sets out the operational Service structure, including all posts' grades and hours.
- 2.2 There are several factors that may require growth to the Establishment to be considered, including for example; changing legislative requirements; increases to the borough's population; or customer demand / expectations.
- 2.3 In many cases, Services can accommodate these additional pressures by managing their overall resource envelope. However, occasionally it is necessary to seek additional resources to meet these new needs.
- 2.4 This report sets out a proposal to increase the Establishment in two Services as follows:

- Creation of a two-year fixed-term project officer post within the Strategy & Innovation Service.
- Increasing a current 0.5 FTE Electoral Assistant Post to a full-time role within the Elections Team on a permanent basis.

Strategy & Innovation

- 2.5 This proposal is for the creation of a new temporary project officer, to be funded for a period of two years, in the Strategy and Innovation service.
- 2.6 There are currently two corporate Project Manager roles at Test Valley Borough Council. These roles have been in place since 2016 and became part of the Innovations & Projects team when the Strategy & Innovation service was formed in November 2020. The roles provide professional project management services across the organisation, delivering projects which enable the Council to meet its corporate priorities. These projects range in complexity and scale from internal business changes such as a new sports pitch booking system to large public facing projects such as the Town Mills Riverside Park. The team have established a positive reputation within the business and the value they add to projects has been recognised. The range of projects that they manage has grown in complexity and diversity over the past five years.
- 2.7 The demand for project management within the organisation is growing as key strategic programmes and projects come forward, such as the Climate Emergency, the Waste Strategy and our internal new ways of working programme. Each of these encompass significant areas of work to be delivered over the next two years to challenging timescales. To ensure the success of these programs, it is imperative to utilise the skills and disciplines of the project managers to draw the appropriate resources together from across the Council and recognise the interdependencies of each.
- 2.8 To maximise the effectiveness of our project managers and to support the organisation on its modernisation journey, a need has been identified for an additional temporary resource which will underpin the capacity of the Innovation and Projects team to support the major projects it is working on. Introducing a Project Officer into the team will release capacity for the Project Managers, enabling them to dedicate more time and effort to the more complex tasks for corporate strategic projects whilst we also continue to meet the demand to support and progress smaller internal business change projects.
- 2.9 The proposed post of Project Officer will assist in the management of a range of projects within the Council and support business change within the organisation. The post-holder will undertake standard project management activities including the organisation of project boards and teams, identifying risks, issues and opportunities whilst supporting the wider organisation modernisation agenda. They will play an active role in supporting the Project Managers with the complex projects previously mentioned, positively impacting the team's ability to deliver to a consistently high standard.

- 2.10 The Project Officer role has been evaluated through the HAY grading process as a grade 6 post. The following costs have been provided on the assumption that appointment to the role would be at no higher than point 2 in the grade, with a progression to point 3 in year two.

Year one cost	£33,914
Year two cost	£35,510
Total cost over two year period	£69,424

- 2.11 As this post is about creating capacity to enable the Council to complete projects and deliver on its priorities, the Head of Finance and Revenues has recommended that the cost be met from the Capacity Building Reserve.

Legal & Democratic Service

- 2.12 The current Electoral Services Team comprises 3 full-time equivalent posts. Two are full-time posts; Electoral Services Manager and Electoral Services Officer and two are part-time (0.5FTE) Electoral Services Assistants.
- 2.13 The proposal is to increase one of the Electoral Service Assistant posts from part-time (0.5FTE) to full-time (1 FTE).
- 2.14 The structure of the Elections team has remained unchanged for the last seven years. During that time the volume and complexity of work has steadily increased, including the introduction of Individual Electoral registration, canvass reform, enhanced emphasis on maintaining the accuracy of the Register, additional reporting and greater scrutiny on the delivery of elections.
- 2.15 In addition to this, the additional work which will be presented by the Elections Bill, when enacted, is significant. This includes:
- Requiring voters to show ID at polling stations before a ballot paper is issued.
 - Requiring Electoral Registration Officers based in local authorities to issue free voter identification documents to anyone without a valid form of photo ID who requires one.
 - Requiring postal voters to reapply for a postal vote every three years, replacing the current rules of refreshing their signature every five years.
 - Restricting the handling of postal votes, including limiting the number of postal votes that an individual can hand in at a polling station.
 - Further limiting the number of people someone may act as a proxy for.
 - Extending accessibility to elections including requiring Returning Officers to take all reasonable steps to provide support for those with a disability in polling stations.
 - Allowing all British Citizens living overseas to vote in UK Parliamentary elections, regardless of when they left the UK ('votes for life').

- 2.16 An extension to the establishment is necessary in order to maintain the existing standard of work, comply with legislative provisions and absorb the upcoming Elections Act requirements.
- 2.17 This post is a Grade 4/5 career graded post and the budget implications of this increase would be £14,830 per annum (including on-costs). The cost is unbudgeted for. Cabinet has authority to authorise this level of unbudgeted expenditure pro rata for this financial year. This cost would then be incorporated into the base budget for the forthcoming financial year and would lead to an increase in the forecast budget gap for 2022/23.

3 Corporate Objectives and Priorities

- 3.1 Support for the delivery of projects will build in additional strength to the Council's ability to deliver the projects that are included in the Corporate Action Plan.

4 Options

- 4.1 Option 1 - Do not approve the additional resources
- 4.2 Option 2 – Approve the changes to the Establishment and associated budget pressures (Recommended)
- 4.3 Option 3 - Consider alternative options that could deliver the requirements within existing budgets

5 Option Appraisal

5.1 Option 1 - Do not approve the additional resources

- 5.1.1 This option would not result in any additional resources being provided to the two Services. However, there is a risk that the Council will not be able to meet legislative requirements and / or achieve the objectives of the Corporate Plan without the requested resources

- 5.1.2 This option is not recommended.

5.2 Option 2 - Approve the changes to the Establishment and associated budget pressures (Recommended)

- 5.2.1 The two Service growth areas identified in the report arise as a consequence of increased legislative requirements or the Council's own aspirations to deliver its Corporate Plan objectives.
- 5.2.2 The proposals in the report do come with a budget consequence (see Resource Implications section, below). However, these costs are recommended to be approved to ensure that the Council can continue to deliver high-quality services to the people of Test Valley.
- 5.2.3 This is the recommended option.

5.3 Option 3 - Consider alternative options that could deliver the requirements within existing budgets

5.3.1 The Heads of Service for each resource area have considered options for whether compensating savings can be found to meet the operational requirements these posts would help to meet. It is their opinion that reducing capacity in other areas of their Services would only serve to create additional and equally undesirable pressure on service delivery.

5.3.2 This option is not recommended.

6 Risk Management

6.1 An evaluation of the risks indicate that the existing controls in place mean that no significant risks have been identified at this time.

7 Resource Implications

7.1 The resource implications of the three proposals are set out in the table below.

	Temp / Ongoing	Net Cost £
Project Support Officer	Temp	35,510
Electoral Services Assistant	Ongoing	14,830
Total		50,340

7.2 It is recommended that the temporary Project Support Officer requirement be met from a draw from the Capacity Building Reserve. The two-year requirement is estimated to be £69,424. The current unallocated balance on the reserve is £229,600.

7.3 As the Electoral Services post is a permanent change, it is not appropriate to use reserves to fund it and this will therefore amount to budget growth. It is expected that there will be sufficient revenue savings in the current year to meet the part-year costs. However, this will add a budget pressure of £14,830 to the budget gap for 2022/23.

8 Legal Implications

8.1 There are no legal implications arising from the recommended option.

9 Conclusion and reasons for recommendation

9.1 The report identifies two Service areas where additional resources have been identified as necessary as a result of legislative changes or to assist in the delivery of Corporate Plan objectives.

9.2 It is recommended that the additional resources, as set out in the report, be approved.

Background Papers (Local Government Act 1972 Section 100D)

Confidentiality

It is considered that this report does not contain exempt information within the meaning of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, and can be made public.

No of Annexes:	0	File Ref:	
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Report to:	Cabinet	Date:	29 September 2021