

# **Realigning the Corporate Support Team**

**Feedback on comments  
received and final  
proposals**

**May 2014**

## **Introduction**

Following consultation with the Senior Management Team, the proposal document, 'Realigning the Corporate Support Team' was issued for consultation to affected staff on 22 January 2014 and responses were invited during the consultation period. Five responses were received and the organisation wishes to thank the members of staff for taking the time to provide detailed responses to the proposals.

It should be noted that the Democratic & Electoral Services Manager was on maternity leave when the proposal document for consultation was written. The responses provided in this document have been provided by the Democratic and Electoral Services Manager, having taken into account the written comments received and from discussions with the Senior Management Team, the Head of Legal and Policy Development, the Interim Democratic and Electoral Services Manager, the Corporate Support Team and HR.

## **Justification**

Since the consultation ended the post of Chief Executive has left the organisation and the Corporate Director of Resources and Corporate Director of Services and Neighbourhoods have assumed shared responsibility for the role of Head of Paid Service. Services that were the direct responsibility of the Chief Executive have been reallocated under the Corporate Directors.

Although a decision has yet to be made regarding the replacement of the Corporate Director of Resources, when he leaves the Council on 1 July 2014, the need for the provision of support services to Senior Management will remain.

On 5 March 2014, Cabinet resolved to create a central Events Team based at Marketing Gloucester. The new team will take on responsibility for a number of events that form part of the Civic calendar and are currently organised by the Corporate Support Team. These events include: Three Choirs Festival; Remembrance Sunday; Gloucester Day; Flying the Flag for Armed Forces Day; Annual Civic Service; children's Civic Christmas Party.

It is acknowledged that this change in workload for the Corporate Support team was not explicitly included in the proposal document consulted upon, however, the team were verbally made aware of these proposals and a number of the comments received relate to this.

The change in the delivery of these events will not take place until the autumn of 2014 and will remain with the Corporate Support Team until then.

In considering all of the above, the final proposals for a restructured Corporate Support Team are based on supporting Senior Management, the Leader of the Council, and the Mayor and Deputy Mayor / Sheriff.

## Feedback on comments received

In the table that follows, comments have been grouped accordingly and responses provided.

Comment	Response
<p><b>Comments relating to the provision of job descriptions for new posts</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ I was very disappointed to find that there was insufficient information provided in relation to the functions of the generic role. I felt that either a new job description, or at least detailed functions of the role</li> <li>▪ The consultation document does not provide details of the duties and responsibilities included in the new role. As the current roles are being deleted, sight of the new or a draft Job Description (not our current one) would have been useful to enable more adequate comments to be provided.</li> <li>▪ Firstly I would like to state that I have found this difficult as we have not seen the new (draft) job description. I understand that we are to comment on our current JD however I have to take into account that organising Civic events may be included in the role but it may not.</li> <li>▪ As our jobs are being deleted, I feel we should have been provided with a new job description to comment on, that reflects the new posts, instead of being given a copy of our current Job Description and being asked to comment on hypothetical scenarios relating to the Civics work, eg. if this work remains in the team or not, or is split between teams.</li> </ul>	<p>The consultation document proposed that the ‘Corporate Support Officer’ posts be deleted and new ‘Executive Support Officer’ posts be introduced. Although draft job descriptions / person specifications were not provided, the affected employees were fully informed of the responsibilities of these proposed posts.</p> <p>The Corporate Support Officer job description and person specification have been reviewed and updated, draft copy attached for information.</p>
<p><b>Comments relating to ‘At risk’ letters</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What happened to the ‘At Risk’ letters, to confirm deletion of posts? Should we be expecting these at some point?</li> </ul>	<p>The proposals were for consultation only and were not confirmation that any posts would be deleted.</p>
<p><b>Comments relating to changing the name of the team</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ I agree that the change of name to Executive Support Team will identify the team more clearly along with the role.</li> </ul>	<p>As no fundamental changes are being proposed to the Corporate Support Officer post, the job title will remain the same. The team will</p>

	continue to be referred to as the Corporate Support Team.
<p><b>Comments relating to the responsibility for civic support and impact of reduction in the number of FTE posts</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Civics is a specialist area (eg. protocols and knowledge of Civics) and not something which should be taken on by anybody or shared amongst a Support Team. It is important to have one point of contact for the Mayor/Sheriff. In the past, it has been known for external people to be confused as to which support officer is dealing with what. Over the last two years it has been a very difficult time in juggling Civics work with corporate/strategic workloads (having to switch hats!). I have always been of the understanding that Civics is an area which requires professionalism and proficiency. Civics requires the full attention of a dedicated support officer, not someone who juggles their daily work programme. This role is very much about forward planning and should not incur any errors.</li> <li>▪ Separating Civics support from Leadership support would enable the FTEs to provide a more dedicated and efficient service to Leadership, and senior managers as required.</li> <li>▪ Civic support could be based in the Executive Office to assist with office cover as and when required.</li> <li>▪ Including Civics in the role of EST would not give the 3FTEs adequate training opportunities/be brought up to speed whilst carrying out other duties.</li> <li>▪ Concerns have been expressed and discussed on many occasions with the Democratic Services Manager and SMT about how much pressure is put on the team and individuals due to the large amount of work involved in the planning and running of the Civic Events.</li> <li>▪ It also needs to be noted that previously (before it was transferred to the Corporate Support Team) the role of the Mayor's Secretary was undertaken by 1 FTE, a part time assistant and the assistance of 3 administrative clerks.</li> <li>▪ I personally feel that if the team is reduced from 4 to 3 it will be very</li> </ul>	<p>The comments received in relation to the Civic support element of the team's workload largely indicate a preference for Civic support to be located outside of the Corporate Support Team. The rationale for this is that event organisation, diary management and liaising with the Mayor and Deputy Mayor/Sheriff take up a significant amount of time, at the expense of support to SMT and the Leader of the Council. A level of expertise is also suggested, which cannot be developed and maintained if the work is divided amongst the post-holders.</p> <p>The Team feels very strongly that they would not be able to cope if the number of FTE posts was reduced without any reduction in the workload. In contrast, the removal of the Civics workload would enable the post-holders to focus on the SMT and other officers / members.</p> <p>As previously stated, responsibility for the organisation of six key Civic events will transfer to a central events team within Marketing Gloucester.</p> <p>It is considered that this reduction in workload, along with a significantly smaller Senior Management Team (from 4 FTE to 2 FTE), justifies a reduction in the number of Corporate Support Officers from 4 FTE to 2.5 FTE. This will create a team of two full-time and one part-time posts, although job-share or other part-time arrangements will be considered.</p> <p>As per the consultation report, this will involve the displacement of all CSOs, who will be included in a competitive ring-fence for the remaining posts.</p>

difficult near impossible to organise the Civic events and still carry out other responsibilities of the role. As a team we have found it hard to manage our workload and organise the events at our current capacity. We all accrued huge amounts of toil/flex due to organising and attending these events and I foresee this being more of a problem once the team is reduced. When booking time off we need to ensure that there is enough cover in the office which can be an issue with 4 of us.

- It would be impossible to maintain the level of support currently provided to the Chief Executive, 2 Directors, Leader, Mayor and Sheriff if there was a reduction in the number of posts from 4 to 3. The Civics work is very detailed and time consuming, with no scope for mistakes.
- If the Events Report is not approved and the workload remains the same, then I feel that a reduced team to 3 FTE Executive support officers will lose the flexibility which it currently has (which is also in our current job description). For example, servicing and taking notes at meetings such as Chamber of Trade and Commerce, Gloucester Advice Partnership, Kings Quarter Monthly Meetings or for a member of the Team being able to work on projects such as the recent Peer Review.
- We will also have to seriously reconsider whether we able to continue to give the support we give outside of SMT i.e. Heads of Services and Cabinet Members.
- Although in the past when we have had a reduction in staff, we have been told that we would stop doing what is not important, and spread the workload, in reality we have still been expected to continue to do the same work as previously and in the same way.
- The aim of the review is to provide a more efficient, streamlined, high performing service. However, with one less FTE and the amount of work involved in Civic events, this will prove very difficult for the team to deliver – a role which will be extremely pressurised and with constant fire-fighting. This will also have an impact on

Further details on the process and timing of the arrangements will be provided separately, once the revised proposals have been endorsed by ODC.

Staff are also reminded that the opportunity to be considered for voluntary redundancy or early retirement is still available. Any staff interested in exploring this option should contact Ruth Aldridge or Ashley Gough for an informal discussion.

individuals' flexi time which has been known to be excessive. My honest opinion is that the Support Service will fail if events are kept within the team.

- A lot of work in relation to events has been streamlined over the last couple of years, but there is still a considerable amount of forward planning, preparation work to be done for each one. With this in mind it is very unlikely that some events will be deleted in future.
- Reducing the numbers by 1 FTE will put a strain on the Executive Support Team if full Civic duties remain within this team. It will prove extremely difficult for the team/individuals to provide the efficient high quality and proactive support to SMT/Leader/Mayor etc. that they require.
- However, if it is simply the operational element of the Civic events that are undertaken by an Events Team and the administration remains with the Executive Support Team, this will have a big impact on the team and the required level of support provided to SMT, Leader, Mayor and Sheriff.
- A team of 3 FTE's could provide extensive high-level support to the Leader, SMT, Mayor and Sheriff but this does depend on the duties and responsibilities of the new role. If the Civic events are delivered in full by a Central Events Team (including the administration i.e. planning & preparation, invitations, seating, etc.), I feel a team of 3FTE's can provide a high-level of support to SMT and the Leader. The team will also be able to provide support to the Mayor and Sheriff including regular meetings, management of the Civic diary & Civics emails and the creation of monthly car sheets.
- If the responsibility of organising Civic events (from start to finish) is not in the job description then I think the workload will be manageable and agree with the proposed restructure of the corporate support team.
- I think that the Corporate Support Team could manage with 3 posts to support the Chief Executive, 2 Directors and Leader, if the entire

Civics work was undertaken elsewhere, although it would still be very busy, especially when officers were on leave or off sick.

- This depends on what part of the Civics work remains within the team. Even if just the invitations and diary management was kept within the team, this is still quite a lot of work and quite detailed, so I am not sure that 3 posts would be able to maintain the level of support expected by the Chief Executive, 2 Directors, Leader Mayor and Sheriff. There would also need to be very close working between the teams undertaking the Civics work to ensure no mistakes were made.
- I understand that there is an Events Report going to Cabinet, which is not mentioned in the proposal document, but potentially has an impact on the role of the Executive Support Team. Although I haven't seen this report, I believe it proposes that the organisation of the Civic events (Remembrance Sunday, Annual Civic Service, Three Choirs Festival, Children's Christmas Party, Gloucester Day, Armed Forces Day) be taken over by the Events Team. The Corporate Support Team would send out the invitations and maintain the day to day civic calendar. If this is approved by Cabinet, it would go some way to ease the workload, but I don't think it is appreciated just how much time and work is involved in the preparation of sending out the invitations. It's not just putting tickets into envelopes. There is a lot more administration involved in the support of the civic calendar compared to the calendars of SMT. It's not just a case of putting dates in the diary and booking refreshments, it also involves checking the availability of (up to 4) civics, city marshal, mayors chauffeur and ceremonial officers if required, obtaining permission to wear chains and updating and circulating the civic engagements sheets.
- I understand that there is an Events report currently going through the reporting cycle and am aware that the functions of Civics within the Support Team is dependent on the outcome of the report. If approved, it is recommended that the Events Team take on the

<p>suggested civic events, co-ordinating/organising in its entirety, with input from EST during the first year – hence project plans produced for each event. There is a large amount of preparation involved in these events from an administrative point of view and having reduced the number of FTE down to three members would mean that there would be even more pressure placed on individuals than at present.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ My main concern from reading the consultation document is the reduction of 1FTE against our current workload. Will our duties and responsibilities (workload) remain the same?</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Comments relating to the evaluation of the post following the transfer of civic events</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Will the role be downgraded, to reflect a decrease in Civic functions?</li> </ul>	<p>There are no fundamental changes proposed to the Corporate Support Officer role. The required reduction in FTE is due to the reduction in workload (a smaller Senior Management Team and the transfer of 6 Civic events). The job descriptions and person specifications for the post have been updated and the posts will remain at an E grade.</p>
<p><b>Comments relating to office cover</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ If a member of staff takes leave or is ill, it will seriously put pressure on the remaining two members of the team.</li> <li>▪ The additional hours I accrued over the last six months or so were not just from working on and attending civic events, but also from maintaining the civic diary and keeping on top of the engagement sheets while still providing support to SMT, and occasionally, the Leader. At times this was quite pressurised, but I had the support of 3 other team members. I would have been reluctant to ask for help if there had been less members of the team.</li> </ul>	<p>Any small team will find it challenging to maintain a normal level of service when team members take annual leave or are unwell. The Corporate Support Officers will be expected to work together to provide an effective service. Support will be available from other team members, along with advice and guidance from the Democratic &amp; Electoral Services Manager.</p>
<p><b>Comments relating to support for the Rugby World Cup</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ There are times when support is required from EST for the Rugby World Cup 2015 and this will become more extensive as we near this significant event. This is something which may not have been considered as part of the review.</li> </ul>	<p>While the Team is sometimes called upon to provide support for specific projects, this should always be agreed in consultation with the Democratic and Electoral Services Manager to ensure there is sufficient capacity within the team.</p>



**Comments relating to one-to-one support vs. generic support**

- As far as a one to one working relationship with SMT and Leader, there will need to be one point of contact for the purposes of diary management, emails and external contacts, to ensure consistency and continuity.
- I agree that improvements can be made such as shared responsibilities across the team to provide a better understanding of each service. However, I do not feel this role can be completely generic with all work being allocated on a shared responsibility basis as proposed.
- The daily management of emails and calendars need to be more structured and will require an element of ownership by each team member. Without this there will be a lack consistency for SMT to enable them to know who is dealing with certain aspects of their work. This will also prevent confusion for the Heads of Service and Managers who liaise with the Corporate Support Team on a daily basis.
- What guarantee will there be for the new Executive Support Team to have generic roles and responsibilities? This is supposed to be the current arrangement, but is certainly not the case

It is important to recognise how the relationship between an individual Corporate Support Officer and a member of SMT works in practice. For consistency and continuity, one-to-one named support is the preferred approach of all concerned. A single point of contact provides continuity for SMT and prevents confusion both within and outside the organisation.

Office cover, and support for colleagues, needs to be provided by the team to cover any absences or peaks in workload. This will be through improvements to communication and working practices rather than changes to the way tasks are allocated.

**Comments relating to management of the Corporate Support Team**

- Should the Executive Support Team remain under the management of the Democratic Services Manager, then the feedback provided at 1:1's/annual appraisals, signing of leave cards, RTW etc need to be improved. The Executive Support Team will work very closely with SMT and feedback from them is essential to the job to ensure individuals know they are providing the correct level of support and that appropriate training is provided as and when required.
- With reference to the Democratic and Electoral Services Manager allocating work on a shared responsibility basis, this is not realistic. As a Support Team, individuals should be using their own initiative

To ensure that the Corporate Support Team is managed at the appropriate level, the Corporate Support Officers will continue to be managed by the Democratic and Electoral Services Manager.

It is acknowledged that this is often challenging for all involved, given that the Democratic and Electoral Services Manager is not responsible for delegating work to the Corporate Support Officers. As before, it is not intended that work be allocated on a shared responsibility basis. The preference and working practices favour one-to-one named support. Steps will be taken to ensure that the team receives appropriate feedback on their performance from those they are

when it comes to work allocation, under the direction of SMT and Leader. The team shouldn't be 'spoon fed' if they are supposed to be high performers and provide an efficient service.

supporting, via the Democratic and Electoral Services Manager. It is considered that procedures for approving leave requests and dealing with return to work interviews has been adequate to date.

### **General Comments**

Service reviews can be distressing for all affected staff and it is recognised that it will be a difficult time.

HR support throughout the process will be provided by Ruth Aldridge and Ashley Gough. Support of a more general nature will also be provided by Tanya Davies (Democratic and Electoral Services Manager) and Sue Mullins (Head of Legal and Policy Development & Monitoring Officer).

The Council's free, confidential and external counselling service can be contacted on 01452 750586.

**DIRECTORATE** : Resources

**SERVICE GROUP** : Democratic & Electoral Services

**SERVICE** : Corporate Support Service

**JOB TITLE** : Corporate Support Officer

**GRADE** : E

**REPORTS TO** : Service Manager – Democratic & Electoral Services

**SUPERVISORY RESPONSIBILITY TO** : None

**JOB PURPOSE:**

To provide a comprehensive support service for the Senior Management Team, the Leader of the Council, and the Mayor and the Sheriff / Deputy Mayor.

**DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:**

1. To maintain realistic and manageable diaries.
2. To ensure all aspects of meetings / conferences are organised, agendas developed and prompt action taken, maintaining timely responses to deadlines at all times.
3. To attend and minute meetings as required.
4. To remain conversant with workloads for Senior Management in order to assist with management of workload and field enquires on service issues.
5. To liaise with members of the public and elected Members on behalf of the Senior Management Team.
6. To undertake tasks, project work and research as directed with minimal supervision.
7. To receive, sort and prioritise mail, and emails, redirecting as appropriate and responding to all routine correspondence without direction
8. To provide cover across the team as and when required.
9. To maintain a small part of the Civic diary of engagements and events.
10. To organise all minor Civic events
11. To liaise with the Lord Lieutenant's office with regard to Royal visits to the City and to assist with all arrangements.
12. To arrange for the attendance of Ceremonial Officers at Civic Events.
13. To organise all Civic Twinning arrangements, including attendance at visits in Gloucester and abroad.
14. To take every opportunity to promote equality and diversity, eliminate harassment, discrimination and victimisation and to adhere to the duties of the Equality Act 2010.
15. Carry out any other duties which fall within the broad spirit, scope and purpose of this job description and which are commensurate with the grade of the post.

## PERSON SPECIFICATION

	<b>ESSENTIAL</b>	<b>DESIRABLE</b>
<b>Education &amp; Qualifications</b>	Advanced IT skills	
<b>Experience &amp; Knowledge</b>	Previous experience of working as a Personal Assistant	Experience of working for a senior manager
	Appropriate level of data protection, security awareness and confidentiality awareness.	
	Ability to work as part of a multidisciplinary team and establish good working relationships at all levels.	
<b>Skills &amp; Abilities</b>	Ability to work as part of a multidisciplinary team and establish good working relationships at all levels	
	Ability to arrange conferences and meetings	
	Ability to work and act on own initiative	
	Able to contribute positively to the team	
	Ability to demonstrate excellent communication skills both orally and written	
	Ability to develop effective administration and support systems	
	Ability to work to tight deadlines and under pressure	
	Ability to prioritise and manage own and others workloads	
	Able to ensure that internal policies and procedures are complied with	
	Willingness to work flexibly	