

Committee: **Council**

Date of meeting: **21st March, 2024**

Report Subject: **Returning Officer & Electoral Registration Officer**

Portfolio Holder: **Councillor Stephen Thomas, Leader of the Council / Cabinet Member Corporate Overview & Performance**

Report Submitted by: **Damien McCann, Interim Chief Executive**

| Reporting Pathway | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|---------|---------|----------------------|
| Directorate Management Team | Corporate Leadership Team | Portfolio Holder / Chair | Governance Audit Committee | Democratic Services Committee | Scrutiny Committee | Cabinet | Council | Other (please state) |
| | X | | | | | | X | |

1. **Purpose of the Report**
 The purpose of the report is to seek Council's approval for continuation of the current arrangements in relation to the appointment of the local Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer for Blaenau Gwent.

2. **Scope and Background**
 At the Special Council meeting on 17th February 2022, the Head of Organisational Development presented a report proposing arrangements as a consequence of the former Managing Director leaving the Council to take up the role of Ombudsman. As part of the report, it was proposed and accepted that the role of Returning Officer/Electoral Registration Officer be temporarily designated to the Head of Legal and Corporate Compliance who had previous experience in acting as the Returning Officer/Electoral Registration Officer. The Chief Officer Resources was to continue in the role of Deputy Returning Officer/Electoral Registration Officer. This was an interim measure until such time as the substantive role of Chief Executive was filled. However, it has not yet been possible to recruit to the role of Chief Executive and there are two national Elections due to take place in 2024, namely, the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) in May 2024 and a UK General Election, date yet unknown but must be held before January 2025. In terms of the Returning Officer/ERO roles, certainty is therefore required for the purposes of the statutory designation.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 **Option 1:**

Council confirms the appointment of the Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance to act as the Returning Officer & Electoral Registration Officer for Blaenau Gwent, until such time as the designation is reviewed.

Option 2:

Council considers an alternative appointment.

4. **Evidence of how this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**

There is a statutory duty to appoint a local Returning Officer and Electoral Registration officer.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

5.1 ***Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)***

There is no impact upon the budget for centrally funded Elections.

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

If a Returning Officer/ERO is not appointed there is a risk of non-compliance with legislation.

5.3 ***Legal***

There is a legal requirement to appoint a Returning Officer/ERO.

5.4 ***Human Resources***

The Returning Officer is separate appointment to any current employment, and is designated under the various legislative provisions.

5.5 ***Health and Safety***

N/A

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

6.2 ***Expected outcome for the public***

6.3 ***Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)***

6.4 ***Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)***

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

6.7 ***Integration (across service areas)***

6.8 ***Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions***

6.9 **Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)** *(All decisions, policy reviews or policy implementation will now require a completed Integrated Impact Assessment) To note a screening template no longer needs to be completed*

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 The arrangements will be reviewed once the substantive role of Chief Executive has been appointed.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

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