

Nottingham City Council Delegated Decision



Nottingham
City Council

Reference Number:

4232

Author:

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Department:

Finance and Resources

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Subject:

HM Coroners Service Restructure

Total Value:

£83,953 per year (Type: Revenue)

Decision Being Taken:

To approve funding for the posts detailed in the exempt appendix within the HM Coroner Service (Portfolio Holder Decision)

To agree a restructure of the HM Coroners Service, as detailed in the exempt appendix (Non-Executive Officer Decision)

See structure chart in exempt appendix.

Reasons for the Decision(s)

The current structure does not adequately resource the workload of the HM Coroners Service. Delivering a Coroner Service to the satisfaction of HM Senior Coroner is a statutory duty. Nottingham City Council are the lead authority providing a service for the whole county on behalf of Nottingham City Council and Nottinghamshire County Council, with the county paying half of the costs of running the service. The Service is the largest jurisdiction in England and Wales in terms of the number of referrals received.

Chief Coroner's annual reports state that where Coroners' Officers manage inquest caseloads (i.e. files for cases which are proceeding to inquest) the case load for each officer or member of staff should be approximately 25 inquest files, having regards to the complexity of the particular cases. Currently Coroners' Officers caseloads in Nottingham are over three times this amount which is unmanageable.

By increasing the establishment with three new Coroners' Officers, it would enable the caseloads to be in in line with national guidance and at a manageable level for colleagues. This would have significant impact on improving colleague's moral, reducing sickness and allow capacity for training and development.

The new structure will also allow the service to retain colleagues who have the experience and knowledge required, as the service struggles to retain experienced colleagues due the demanding nature of the role. Because of the complexity of the role, it takes over a year of training before officers are able to manage the less complex inquest cases, the 'churn' experienced due to issues with retention creates significant issues with resource and morale.

If the new structure is not implemented, the HM Coroner's Service would be unable to meet the Chief Coroner's requirements or manage HM Senior Coroner's expectations. It would extend the current issue of colleagues being subject to unmanageable caseloads. This is resulting in delays and some errors causing issues with statutory timeframes and distress to families, together with potential reputational damage. Potential reputational damage would be incurred, families could experience delays in cases coming to inquest, delays in funerals and hearings cancelled at short notice which also impacts professional witnesses attending court to give evidence, legal representatives and Assistant Coroners who's time is billed to us if last minute cancellations occur.

Other Options Considered:

- 1) Do nothing - Rejected as not sustainable
- 2) Consider whole scale restructure and other alternative structure, but due to the technical and specialist nature of the work this was not felt to be an appropriate course of action at this time.

Background Papers:

n/a

Published Works:

n/a

Affected Wards:

Citywide

Colleague / Councillor Interests:

None

Any Information Exempt from publication:

Yes

Exempt Information:

Description of what is exempt:

Details of the new posts, posts to be deleted and posts to be re-graded

Legal, finance and HR advice

An appendix (or appendices) to this decision is exempt from publication under the following paragraph(s) of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972

1 - Information relating to any individual

The public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information because publishing the legal and HR implications would clearly relate to individuals employed within the service area

4 - Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority.

The public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information because publishing the HR implications would relate to on going consultations between employees and trade union representatives

5 - Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings.

The public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information because the information contained in the legal advice sets out the legal risks inherent in the course of action proposed here, which the decision maker is arguably entitled to consider without Nottingham City Council's position being affected simply by the consideration of those risks.

Documents exempt from publication:

Appendix 1 - details of restructure.docx, DDM legal advice - 11.05.2021.pdf, DDM exempt HR Advice.docx, HM Coroners Structure.pdf, Finance comments - HM Coroners Service Restructure.docx

Consultations:	Date: 05/05/2021
	Other:Senior Coroner - Mairin Casey
	Providing a Coroner service is a statutory duty and must be delivered to the satisfaction to the Senior Coroner who is supporting of this reorganisation of the structure of the office.Once the decision has been approved the team will be consulted.
	Those not consulted are not directly affected by the decision.
Crime and Disorder Implications:	Not required
Equality:	EIA not required. Reasons: The decision does not relate to a new or changing policy or service.
Relates to staffing:	Yes
Decision Type:	Portfolio Holder
Subject to Call In:	Yes
Call In Expiry date:	09/06/2021
Advice Sought:	Legal, Finance, Human Resources
Legal Advice:	This advice is exempt from publication and is contained within an exempt appendix Advice provided by Aman Patel (Solicitor) on 11/05/2021.
Finance Advice:	This advice is exempt from publication and is contained within an exempt appendix Advice provided by Philip Gretton (Finance Analyst) on 20/05/2021.
HR Advice:	This advice is exempt from publication and is contained within an exempt appendix Paul Slater - HR Business Lead Advice provided on 12/05/2021.
Signatures	Sally Longford (PH for Energy, Environment and Waste Services)
	SIGNED and Dated: 01/06/2021
	Clive Heaphy (Chief Finance Officer/CD for Finance & Resources)
	SIGNED and Dated: 01/06/2021