

**Personnel Committee**

**25 March 2010**

**Office of the Chief Executive**

**Designation of Scrutiny Officer**

**Report of the Director of Human Resources & Organisational Development**

**1.0 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To consider a proposal in relation to the designation of the position of Scrutiny Officer.

**2.0 Description of Decision**

To appoint the Head of Scrutiny Charlotte Burnham as Scrutiny Officer under Section 31 of the Local Democracy Economic Development and Construction Act 2009. This requirement is effective on 1 April 2010.

**3.0 Background**

- 3.1 The Local Democracy Economic Development and Construction Act received Royal Assent on 12 November 2009. The Act makes legislative provisions for the most significant proposals outlined in the 2008 Local Government White Paper 'Communities in Control: Real People, Real Power' and takes forward the proposals set out in the 'Review of Sub-National Economic Development and Regeneration (SNR)', both of which the City Council responded to.
- 3.3 The Act seeks to create greater opportunities for local people to become involved in local decision making and in shaping local services and to give greater responsibility to local authorities to promote economic development, helping communities respond to local challenges.

## **4.0 Current Position**

- 4.1 Sunderland is one of few local authorities to have appointed a Head of Overview and Scrutiny, a post that reports directly to the Chief Executive to strategically manage and develop the council's Scrutiny Arrangements. The capacity of the Scrutiny Team has also been increased recently and consists of three Scrutiny Officers, two Assistant Scrutiny Officers and a Trainee Scrutiny Officer, a dedicated resource providing impartial research and support to the Scrutiny Committees.
- 4.2 The Head of Scrutiny is aware that the Council has a duty to promote the local understanding of the function and how the public can become involved, which is very much in line with the Centre for Public Scrutiny's four principles for delivering effective Scrutiny. The new legislative changes will help strengthen the ongoing development work of Scrutiny within Sunderland.

## **5.0 Reason for Decision**

- 5.1 Chapter 1 of the Governance states;
- Every council must appoint a designated "Scrutiny Officer" to:
  - Promote the role of overview and scrutiny committees;
  - Provide support for overview and scrutiny committees; and
  - Provide support and guidance to members and officers in relation to overview and scrutiny committees.
- 5.2 The officer concerned may not be the Monitoring Officer, Chief Finance Officer or Head of Paid Service. It is therefore proposed that the current Head of Scrutiny should be designated as the Scrutiny Officer in accordance with the provisions of the Local Democracy Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

## **6.0 Alternative Options**

- 6.1 One alternative option is to do nothing. However this option is not recommended as this would not allow the Council to fulfil its requirements under the new legislation.

## **7.0 Consultations**

- 7.1 The Director of Financial Resources has confirmed that there are no financial implications associated with this proposal.

