

## Report of the Cabinet Member for Transformation and Performance

Cabinet – 14 April 2015

### APPOINTMENT OF TEMPORARY ASSISTANT CORONER

<b>Purpose:</b>	To appoint a temporary Assistant Coroner
<b>Policy Framework:</b>	None
<b>Reason for Decision:</b>	To comply with a statutory requirement
<b>Consultation:</b>	None
<b>Recommendation(s):</b>	It is recommended that:  1) Caroline Sumeray be appointed as an Assistant Coroner for a fixed period of 12 months from the 26 <sup>th</sup> March 2015
<b>Report Author:</b>	Patrick Arran
<b>Finance Officer:</b>	Mike Hawes
<b>Legal Officer:</b>	As above
<b>Access to Services Officer:</b>	Not applicable

#### 1. Background

The Council has statutory duties in relation to the Coroner Service as provided for by the Coroner and Justice Act 2009.

2. The interim Senior Coroner is Mr Colin Phillips who was appointed on the 31<sup>st</sup> of May 2014 when the previous Coroner, Mr Philip Rogers resigned. There is normally a duty to appoint a Senior Coroner within three months, but due to further potential mergers of coroner areas the Chief Coroner has indicated that he wishes to meet representatives from a number of authorities to discuss options. No meeting has been arranged to date and therefore the interim arrangement will continue until a final decision is made, but there are no indications as to timescales at this point in time.

### **3. The Issue**

Mr Phillips inherited a substantial backlog of historic cases which the Chief Coroner has asked him to conclude at the earliest opportunity. The normal requirement is that cases are concluded within 26 weeks and Mr Phillips has the task of not only dealing with the backlog, but also dealing with business as usual.

4. The backlog includes both Swansea and Neath Port Talbot cases. Swansea is the relevant authority for the Swansea and Neath Port Talbot Coroner Area and therefore responsible for attending to all formalities, which include appointments and providing the Senior Coroner with staff and accommodation.
5. Mr Phillips has two Assistant Coroners and has asked the Coroner for Pembrokeshire and Carmarthenshire to assist, but has indicated that he needs further assistance to deal with the backlog. The Senior Coroner has made enquiries and has identified that the Senior Coroner (Part Time) for the Isle of Wight, Ms Caroline Sumeray, is available to sit to deal with backlog cases and has sought permission for her appointment in this Coroner Area. Schedule 3 of the 2009 Act requires the authority to formally appoint an Assistant Coroner.
6. The Head of Legal, Democratic Services and Procurement can confirm that all other statutory formalities have been complied with in that the appointment has been agreed by the Chief Coroner and the Lord Chancellor.

### **7. Financial Implications**

There are no specific financial implications related to this decision because this is a statutory formality. However, Cabinet will need to be aware that the authority must pay for any time spent by an Assistant Coroner. The agreed daily rate for an Assistant is £400.

- 7.1 There will be no cost to historic cases dealt with by the Senior Coroner as he is paid a salary.
- 7.2 Swansea and Neath Port Talbot will be responsible for paying an Assistant Coroner who deals with a historic case based on the place of death - which is the normal arrangement.

**8. Legal Implications**

There are no additional legal implications to those set out in the body of the report.

**9. Equalities Implications**

There are no equality implications arising from this report and no Equality Impact Assessment is necessary.

**Background Papers:** None.

**Appendices:** None.