

Title: Briefing Note - The impact of the revised Housing Services Management structure and additional resources approved in November 2019

Lead Officer: Lisa Barker

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Matecki

Public briefing note / Confidential briefing note: Public

Wards of the District directly affected: All

Contrary to the policy framework: No

Contrary to the budgetary framework: No

Key Decision: No

Included within the Forward Plan: Yes

Equality Impact Assessment Undertaken: No

Consultation & Community Engagement: Housing Services staff were consulted in the formation of the new structure

Final Decision: N/A

Accessibility checked: Yes

Officer/Councillor Approval

Officer Approval	Date	Name
Chief Executive/Deputy Chief Executive	30.10.20	Bill Hunt
Head of Service	26.10.20	Lisa Barker
CMT	27.10.20	Chris Elliott
Section 151 Officer	30.10.20	Mike Snow
Monitoring Officer	27.10.20	Andrew Jones
Finance	30.10.20	Victoria Bamber
Portfolio Holder(s)	30.10.20	Cllr Matecki

1. Background

1.1. Executive on 13 November 2019 approved the budgetary implications of a proposed redesign of Housing Services. The structure and establishment was approved by Employment Committee on 10th December 2019. Executive recommendations for the potential additional staffing budget was subsequently approved by Council.

1.2. Overview and Scrutiny require an update on the impact of the revised Housing Services Management structure and additional resources approved.

1.3. The redesign of the Housing Service represented significant change for the entire service, structurally, operationally and culturally. The rationale for the redesign and the need for additional resources was set out in the reports for approval. The key drivers for the redesign were:

- Changes in Government policy and the way services needed to be rearranged to effectively manage the impacts.
- External factors such as the growing older population and the number of people sleeping rough on our streets.
- Advancements in IT and the need for more flexible and agile working and the changing expectations of customers.

To deliver on these new requirements and to meet customer obligations and expectations many of the Housing Services teams were already operating to temporary structures. They were also engaged in fixed term contracts, with some key work areas remaining under resourced to deliver the Councils priorities.

1.4. The redesign of the whole of the Housing Service supported by the additional resources has given the opportunity to implement a structure and a new motivation that could deliver all the key work strands effectively and meet customers' expectations.

2. The Redesigned Structure

2.1. Employment Committee approved the:

- Deletion of 6 posts
- Creation of 34 permanent establishment posts and 4, temporary (3 year fixed term) posts
- Review and revision of 93 posts to reflect either significant or minor changes to post titles, duties and/or reporting relationships.

2.2 Following final approvals being in place in December 2019, focus was given to the implementation of the new arrangements.

3. Implementing the Redesigned Structure

3.1. The initial processes for the transition period included:

- Confirming the posts that were substantially unchanged and those substantially the same but where the job description had been 'tweaked'. The staff in these posts automatically transferred into the equivalent post within the new structure. Line managers held 1:1 meetings with relevant officers to talk through the implications for each member of staff in this category.
- Confirming which posts that were broadly the same to an existing post but the changes were sufficient to require the post holder to be assimilated into

the new structure rather than automatically transferred. Line managers explained and discussed this with relevant staff in a 1:1 as part of the consultation process

- Managing the posts which were deleted from the revised structure. The holders of these posts were 'at risk of redundancy' and entered the 'at risk' pool for 12 weeks if they were not matched to a vacant position in the new structure in accordance with normal Council policy. It is heartening to report there were no redundancies.
- New posts or any vacancies that were not subject to assimilation or 'falling out' of the process were then open for internal, then if required external advertisement and recruitment.

3.2. There have also been important operational and management activities to plan, mobilise and integrate the new structure such as:

- Increasing both the management capacity and building capacity within the teams.
- Implementing team mobilisation plans and the required changes processes and systems.
- Communicating with staff about the new structure, providing clarity and understanding of its objectives and the relationship between teams and the customer.
- Addressing training and development needs in response to new processes, systems and procedures.
- Mitigating any risks of there not being a seamless but improved interface with our customers and other stakeholders.

3.3. This transition period has been made even more challenging and the planned timeframes have had to be adjusted because of the response and recovery to the Covid-19 pandemic. In particular this has meant supporting staff to work from home, constructing new operational practices and safe ways of working and for those managers who needed to recruit, adapting to online recruitment and induction processes. However, the objectives and determination of managers and staff to implement the structure and the establishment as originally planned remains in place alongside protecting staff, customers and the community from the impacts of Covid-19.

3.4. Despite the above there are only 8 permanent or temporary posts remaining to which to recruit. The recruitment for these positions is currently being progressed.

4. Budget Comparison

4.1. Approved budgets versus actual spend required after full recruitment
The pre restructure budget 2019/20 - £3,183,407 (92.03 full time equivalent posts)

Agenda Item 4, Appendix 5

Original budget approved 2020/21 - £3,733,084 (110.14 full time equivalent posts)

The current position is that there is a budget Variance of £26,739 brought about as a consequence of assimilating staff being on protected salaries.

The consequence of recruitment being delayed has resulted in an underspend which is assessed as creating a saving in the current financial year of £472,000.

Although there are still posts to be filled, it is unlikely that all of the new staff will be in post before the end of the financial year. The impact of new staff starting between now and the end of March will be to reduce the savings for the current financial year.

5. Positive Impacts and Service Benefits

5.1. Overview

- Even with the impact of Covid-19 on the mobilisation and embedding in of the new structure positive advancements have been made against the planned impacts and service improvements throughout the business areas of the redesigned service.

5.2. Housing Needs

- In the new structure the housing assistants within the Homelessness and Housing Advice Team are now arranged in two distinct groups, Housing options assistants and Housing advice and allocation assistants. This has enabled the staff to focus and develop knowledge in a smaller defined area and this has benefited the customers as this specialist knowledge has been imparted to customers reducing the number of follow up queries.
- For homeless people, the Coronavirus pandemic and the Government directive to get "Everyone in" from March 2020, has had a big impact on the Housing Needs team as a whole and they have worked extremely hard to make sure all rough sleepers and those homeless that were facing rough sleeping were provided with interim accommodation. The new structure and team members were undoubtedly instrumental in taking forward the work on this initiative. Thanks to these efforts over 60 individuals have been helped in to accommodation with around 30 former rough sleepers provided with settled accommodation.

5.3. Landlord Services

- Two new Sheltered Living Officers have been appointed. Providing a presence on our schemes for older people which has been appreciated by customers and their families. They have provided customers with a known figure and a regular presence from the Council.
- The new structure has allowed the effective managing of our portfolio of residential buildings and in particular, the high rise blocks and environment

around them. The team has delivered very important work to facilitate and support the High rise and Low rise fire protection works and day to day management and oversight of these buildings.

- This team, during this difficult period for residents due to the impacts of Covid-19, have been able to support and advise residents responding to and supporting residents with financial hardship and a variety of other social, practical and emotional needs.
- Landlord operations are now able to mobilise the teams bringing Housing and income officers together to deliver a joined-up approach in managing sustainment of tenancy. Key staff are appointed but are yet to join the team.

5.4. Strategy and Development

- The Customer Service team have now recruited to vacant posts and are working as a team to develop the customer engagement area of work. There is a more consistent approach to customer complaints as a result of the new Team Leader being in post.
- The affordable housing programme is being developed and schemes successfully secured which would have been a considerable challenge beforehand.
- A new Housing Allocations Policy is being progressed to ensure alignment with current housing needs and available affordable stock.
- There has been significant progress in reviewing key policies and housing strategy facilitated by the new structure.

5.5. Business Development and Change

- Key business critical projects such as the upgrade of active H system and implementation of new modules are being progressed. This new team are getting to grips with key areas of work, supporting efforts on fire safety, policy and practice, development, performance management and business development. Their focus is enabling important pieces of work to be taken forward.
- The new team whilst still to recruit to two of the posts are also involved in developing business cases, providing scoping documents for service improvement projects as well as starting to introduce a more robust and structured approach to managing and delivering projects across the service.
- The team has been able to support the mobilisation activities by reviewing processes and procedures and providing operational guides which ensure consistency of service with new staff

6. Conclusion

- 6.1.** The first year was anticipated to be a transition year and inevitably efforts have been impeded by the impacts on Housing services of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 6.2.** Despite this additional challenge good progress has been made in implementing the new structure, mitigating the risks identified in the reports and starting to realise the service benefits that the new structure and additional resources will ultimately bring.