

 Employment 5th April 2011	Agenda Item No. 4
	Title Revised structure to deliver Service Improvements for Housing and Property Services
For further information about this report please contact	Jacky Oughton Rents and Finance Manager Housing and Property Services
Service Area	Housing and Property Services
Wards of the District directly affected	All
Is the report private and confidential and not for publication by virtue of a paragraph of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006	No
Date and meeting when issue was last considered and relevant minute number	9.2.11 Executive - Agenda item 5
Background Papers	9.2.11 Executive

Contrary to the policy framework:	No
Contrary to the budgetary framework:	No
Key Decision?	No
Included within the Forward Plan? (If yes include reference number)	No

Officer/Councillor Approval		
With regard to officer approval all reports <i>must</i> be approved by the report authors relevant director, Finance, Legal Services and the relevant Portfolio Holder(s).		
Officer Approval	Date	Name
Chief Executive		
Deputy Chief Executive	22.3.11	Bill Hunt
Deputy Chief Executive		
Finance	23.3.11	Sandra Jones
Portfolio Holder(s)	23.3.11	Councillor Moira-Ann Grainger
Consultation Undertaken		
Please insert details of any consultation undertaken with regard to this report.		
Final Decision?		Yes
Suggested next steps (if not final decision please set out below)		

1. **SUMMARY**

- 1.1 Employment Committee is asked to approve changes to the Housing and Property establishment following Executive approval to provide extra budget for 4 additional posts to deliver Service Improvement priorities and the provision of a Tenant Participation Manager to be funded from existing budget, as detailed in the report to Executive on 9th February 2011. A copy of the revised establishment is provided in appendix 1.

2. **RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 That Employment committee approve 5 additional establishment posts, approved by Executive, for Housing and Property Services, as follows:
- 2.1.1 Appointment of an 'Asbestos Programme Officer' to manage the asbestos programme at an annual additional cost of £29,000 per year for a fixed term period of 3 years (inclusive of on costs) commencing June 2011.
- 2.1.2 Appointment of 'Service Improvement Plan Support Officer' to manage the Service Improvement Plan at an annual additional cost of £30,000 per year for a fixed term period of 2 years (inclusive of on costs) commencing June 2011.
- 2.1.3 Appointment of an 'Active H Performance Improvement Officer' to manage and support the development of quality of performance information and improved IT systems at an additional cost of £29,000 per year for a fixed term period of 3 years (inclusive of on costs) commencing June 2011.
- 2.1.4 Appointment a Lettings and Financial Inclusion officer for a fixed term period of 2 years at a cost of £27,000 (including on-costs) commencing June 2011, as a 'invest to save' initiative to ensure continued generation of additional income by reducing void rent loss and current tenant arrears.
- 2.1.5 Appointment of a Senior Tenant Participation Officer on a full-time, permanent basis at a cost of £30,000 per year to ensure that the Strategy for Customer Involvement and Empowerment is implemented.

3. **REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATION**

- 3.1 Executive on 9th February 2011 approved budget for additional posts to deliver Service Improvement Priorities.
- 3.2 In order to effectively manage the Asbestos Programme and maintain the Council's obligations under Asbestos Regulations, a full time post is required. The post holder will develop and implement the asbestos procedure and manage the programme. In addition to managing the asbestos programme the post holder would also give advice about asbestos to tenants and leaseholders wishing to make alterations to dwellings, and carry out on-site inspections.
- 3.2.1 On 13th December 2010 the TSA approved the Council's Service Improvement Plan. The management of the Audit Commission Inspection and the development of the SIP have been temporarily supported on a part time basis by the Technical Administration Officer over the last six months. Effective project management support to deliver the SIP will be required for the next 24 months.

3.2.3 The service has set up an IT Project Board which is chaired by the Rents and Finance Manager. The board is overseeing the development and management of a comprehensive IT Programme which informs service priorities for the Council's IT Support Team. In order to deliver these priorities, wider performance improvement initiatives, and actions set out in the SIP it is necessary to appoint an Active H (the computer system used by Housing and Property Services) Performance Improvement Officer.

3.14 The effective management of the empty (void) properties has resulted in the reduction in the time taken to re-let homes that become vacant and this has resulted in a reduction in the void rent loss from 0.69% (financial year to date) compared to 1.08% in 2009/10, and as a result the service is predicting an additional income versus budgeted void loss for 2010/11 of around £95,000. As a result an opportunity exists to re-invest a proportion of this additional income by appointing a Lettings and Financial Inclusion Officer for a fixed period of 2 years. This post will focus on:

- Using data and principles of system thinking to let homes and garages more quickly.
- Promoting the Tenant's Incentive Scheme and Resettlement Service and address 'difficult to let' properties by making proposals to improve the prospects of quicker re-let times and therefore increase income.
- Assist tenants to become financial literate and to maximise their income (through benefit take-up, debt advice, budgeting advice, promoting affordable credit and getting people back to work), reducing rent arrears and other council debts and therefore enabling them to sustain their tenancies.

3.1.5 The Regulatory Framework for social housing requires the Council to demonstrate significant tenant and leaseholder involvement in all aspects of the management of its homes and leasehold flats. It places a responsibility on the Council to ensure that its tenants are appropriately equipped to properly and effectively scrutinise the services they receive and the performance of the Council. The Tenant Services Authority closely monitors the performance of the Council in this respect and the Council must ensure it provides an effective tenant involvement programme with beneficial outcomes for tenants. The purpose of the Senior Tenant Participation Officer is to ensure the framework is in place for this to be achieved.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTION CONSIDERED

The alternative option is for the Employment Committee not to approve the establishment changes already agreed by the Executive committee. If these changes were not approved then there would be an increased risk of the service not meeting the deadlines set out in the Service Improvement Plan, plus an increased risk of the service failing to meet the Regulatory Framework.

5. BUDGETARY FRAMEWORK

5.1 Funding for 4 posts was approved by Council on 9th February 2011 as part of the report requesting additional funds from the HRA budget to deliver immediate priorities for the Service Improvement Plan in Housing and Property Services, whilst funding for the Senior Participation Officer will come from existing budgets. Executive were reassured that the additional expenditure would not compromise the HRA business plan.

6. **POLICY FRAMEWORK**

6.1 The service priorities and recommendations in this report will ensure Housing and Property Services continues to maintain a robust HRA whilst delivering priorities as set out in:

- Service Improvement Plan
- Service Area Plan
- Portfolio Holder Statement, and ultimately
- Fit for the Future