

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Leader and Cabinet

13 April 2006

AUTHOR: Housing and Environmental Services Director

IMPLEMENTATION OF HOUSING CHOICE BASED LETTINGS

Purpose

1. To request agreement of an 18 month fixed term post of Choice based Lettings Project Officer.

Effect on Corporate Objectives

2. Quality, Accessible Services	Development of Choice based lettings scheme, which focuses on applicants for social housing having increased choice.
Village Life	As part of an options package allows those in housing need to exercise choice over their rehousing options.
Sustainability	As above
Partnership	This is a sub-regional scheme involving 5 Local Authorities in Cambridgeshire, St Edmundsbury and Forest Heath DC and local housing associations.

Background

3. Cabinet agreed in principle on 8 September 2005 to proceed to implement a sub regional choice based lettings (CBL) scheme in order to achieve the ODPM's requirement for CBL in all areas by 2010. An application by the seven sub regional partner authorities for funding attracted £181,000 which will be used to fund a sub regional project manager and purchase of software.
4. The transition from the current points based housing allocation system to a CBL model will require a fundamental review of current policies and systems; the introduction of new policies; procurement of new ICT infrastructure; consultation with 5000 housing applicants; and training and briefing for all stakeholders. In order to achieve delivery by November 2007 a need for additional project management capacity within the Council has been identified.
5. A sub regional project management infrastructure has been agreed and the Council's housing, strategic housing, ICT and Legal services are engaged in preliminary work. The Council now needs to develop a local implementation team and a project team has been established by the Head of Strategic Housing.

Considerations

6. Without this additional staff resource it is unlikely the Council will be successful in implementing the scheme by the required target date. It is evident from analysis of likely workloads that additional project management capacity is required to support local implementation.

Options

7. It is proposed that a full time project officer is appointed, initially for an 18 month term, to support the Housing Advice and Homelessness Manager in implementing CBL within South Cambridgeshire.

Financial Implications

8. A commitment has already been given to fund CBL implementation within existing budgets. The annual cost of the new post is likely to be in region of £32,000 and will be funded from Housing General Fund and Housing Revenue Account sources (23/77% respectively) through virements in 2006/07 and a budgetary provision will be made in 2007/08 for the remaining term of the contract.

Legal Implications

9. None.

Staffing Implications

10. There is not the capacity amongst current posts to undertake this work.

Consultations

11. None – although most other Cambridgeshire local authorities are also intending to seek an additional staff member for this purpose.

Conclusions/Summary

12. An extra member of staff is required to undertake the tasks required at a local level to ensure the successful implementation of the sub-regional Choice Based Lettings scheme.

Recommendations

13. That an 18 month fixed term post of CBL Project Officer be established to support the implementation of CBL, to be funded from a mix of Housing General Fund and Housing Revenue Account sources.

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