

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Housing Portfolio Holder

18 January 2011

AUTHOR/S: Executive Director of Operational Services / Corporate Manager
Affordable Homes

AFFORDABLE HOMES RESTRUCTURING PLAN 2012/13

Purpose

1. To seek the approval of the Housing Portfolio Holder for staff changes necessary to meet the new demands arising from the introduction of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) self financing regime and the changes to the housing regulatory framework.
2. This is a key decision as it is likely to result in the Council incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the Council's budget for the service or function to which the decision relates.

Recommendations

3. That the Housing Portfolio agrees to the proposed restructure of Affordable Homes as set out in Table 1 and recommends to Council making funds available for potential redundancies.
4. The changes are required to the staffing structure within Affordable Homes to ensure that the service is best placed to deliver improved services over the coming years.

Background

5. A number of changes were made to the Affordable Homes staff structure with effect from 2010/11. These were required to bring spending in line with reduced income at that time. This was successfully completed.
6. New changes are now required for the following reasons:
 - Reform of the HRA and the introduction of self-financing from 2012/13. This issue has been reported to the Portfolio Holder on 17/11/10 and 15/6/11. The Council will be required to take on a debt of £206M. This requires changes to staffing to ensure that we are able to manage this debt including strengthening our asset management team and increasing the project management capacity to be able to deliver a larger capital programme.
 - The Government is also introducing a number of policy changes related to housing including changes to tenancy allocation, welfare benefits and homelessness duties. In addition there has been the abolition of the Audit Commission and the Tenant Services Authority together with a consultation on the housing regulatory framework to be overseen by a new team within the Homes and Communities Agency. This will place new duties upon landlords to carry out a higher degree of self regulation with increased levels of tenant engagement.

- The County Council is seeking to balance the budget for Supporting People services. This requires a cut in the contract sum received by the Council for 2012/13 to manage our sheltered housing service and a competitive tender of this contract to start in April 2013.

Considerations

7. The HRA 30 year Business Plan will be reported to Cabinet and full Council in February 2012 for approval. All of the proposed staffing changes are accounted for within the financial estimates for 2012/13 and are affordable.
8. The proposed staffing changes include the creation of some permanent new posts to enable the Council to address the new demands identified above. Some of the proposed new posts are fixed term appointments to provide extra capacity whilst service adjustments are being made.
9. The changes to sheltered housing service require a more fundamental restructure. A separate more detailed report will be brought to the Portfolio Holder in February 2012 after the Scrutiny Task and Finish group set up to investigate this issue has reported to Cabinet with its recommendations.
10. The recommendations in this report with regard to sheltered housing are required in order that the timeframes for consultation with staff can be adhered and do not commit the Portfolio Holder to a final decision ahead of the February report.
11. Unlike the other staffing changes in this report the proposed changes to sheltered housing requires a reduction in posts and up to six potential redundancies. The cost of these redundancies has not been accounted for in the 2011/12 estimates and therefore requires Council approval.
12. The effect of all of these proposed staffing changes for Affordable Homes is a net increase of five posts excluding the fixed term appointments.

Options

13. The Portfolio Holder is requested to consider the following proposed staffing changes:

Table 1

Proposed changes	Description	Funding implications
3 new posts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Manager (disabled adaptations) • Voids and Health & Safety Surveyor • Project Manager (new council house building) 	Required to oversee increased capital programme	Fully funded from the capital element of HRA business plan and HRA self funding settlement
3 new posts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asset Management Officers 	Required to manage new debt and increase asset management capacity	Fully funded in Business Plan as a result of HRA self financing changes

<p>4 new posts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenant Participation Officer • Anti Social Behaviour Officers (2) • Housing Policy Officer (regulatory support) 	<p>Increased housing management capacity to meet new requirements of housing regulatory framework and to address tenant led priorities.</p>	<p>Fully funded in Business Plan as a result of HRA self financing changes</p>
<p>5 temporary posts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private Rented Sector Project Officer • Under Occupation Project Officer • Customer Care Project Officer • Housing Options Administrative Assistant • Retrofit Project Officer (EU project) 	<p>Fixed term roles (12 months apart from externally funded EU project post which is 3 years) required to make service adjustments or oversee short term projects</p>	<p>Fully funded in Business Plan together with external grant funding for specific projects (Private Rented Sector post and EU project)</p>
<p>1 new post</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homelessness Officer 	<p>Required to strengthen the homelessness team.</p>	<p>Included within housing GF financial estimates 2012/13. Additional homelessness prevention expenditure originally approved by Cabinet on 13/1/11.</p>
<p>Deletion of 26 Sheltered Housing Officer posts which are currently budgeted for and occupied and three sheltered housing Team Leader posts</p>	<p>Role to be replaced by two new teams listed below</p>	<p>Overall reduction in sheltered housing budget to meet savings required by Supporting People for 2012/13. There will be some redundancy costs to be met by the Council which are not included within the HRA original estimates for 2011/12 which would need to be included in the revised estimates.</p>
<p>12 new posts Sheltered Estates Officers and 1 new Team Leader post</p>	<p>To undertake housing management related work only in the sheltered schemes</p>	<p>Funded by HRA and Service Charges</p>
<p>9 new Visiting Support posts</p>	<p>To undertake all of the</p>	<p>Funded by</p>

and 1 new Team Leader post	housing support duties required for the sheltered housing schemes.	Supporting People contract and charges for the alarm service
Assistive Technology team (at least 1 new permanent post and a further fixed term post (with potentially up to 3 additional fixed term posts).	Permanent team to continue with the Community Lifeline work and other assistive technology. Small team currently includes one permanent officer and a fixed term post	To be funded from charges levied (currently a self funded team) with potential extra funding from Supporting People.

Implications

14.	Financial	All of the proposed changes are fully accounted for in the HRA and housing General Fund estimates for 2012/13 apart from the redundancy costs for the sheltered housing officers which will be accounted for in the 2011/12 financial year.
	Legal	Proposed changes to the sheltered housing service require statutory consultation periods to be adhered to before any redundancies can be actioned.
	Staffing	This report is seeking overall authority to undertake a number of staffing changes. The detailed work required to implement these changes will be overseen by the Corporate Manager Affordable Homes in consultation with the Chief Executive and the Council's head of HR. Recruitment processes will be scheduled during 2012/13. The redundancy process is planned to be completed by the end of June 2012.
	Risk Management	A number of risk logs will be developed for each project and the overall Affordable Homes risk register amended as necessary.
	Equality and Diversity	All staff changes will be carried out in accordance with equalities legislation.
	Equality Impact Assessment completed	N/A apart from the changes to sheltered housing for which an EQIA will be completed for the February Portfolio Holder Report.
		NA
	Climate Change	N/A

Consultations

15. There has been initial consultation with both staff and tenants affected by the proposed sheltered housing changes. There has also been consultation with the Tenant Participation Group and a tenants survey to help identify tenant spending priorities. This has shown that disabled adaptations is a critical area and that Anti Social Behaviour remains a concern to many tenants.

Consultations with Children & Young People

16. None

Effect on Strategic Aims

17. **Commitment to being a listening council, providing first class services accessible to all.** The affordable housing programme is one of the key roles of the Council. The overall intention of these proposed changes is to strengthen the operational effectiveness of Affordable Homes.

Conclusions / Summary

18. This report sets out in summary form the key changes required to the staffing structure within Affordable Homes to ensure that the service is best placed to deliver improved services over the coming years.

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

None

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