

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Leader and Cabinet 8 December 2005
AUTHOR: Housing and Environmental Services Director

REORGANISATION OF HOUSING SERVICES

Purpose

1. To seek delegated authority to proceed with further reorganisation of the Housing Services team.

Effect on Corporate Objectives

2. Quality, Accessible Services	The Housing Service delivers tenancy and estate management to tenants of general needs and sheltered housing, administers the housing register, allocations and lettings for social housing in South Cambridgeshire, and provides homelessness and housing advice services.
Village Life	
Sustainability	
Partnership	

Background

3. Cabinet agreed on 14 July 2005 to support the reorganisation of the Housing Services management team. The report considered by Cabinet explained that further organisational change would follow when senior managers were appointed.
4. The drivers for change include:
 - (a) A requirement to make savings of over £437,000 from 2006/07 in order to balance the Housing Revenue Account
 - (b) Locating all responsive repairs activities within the technical service
 - (c) The introduction of a choice based lettings scheme
 - (d) A significant reduction in Right to Buy sales

Proposed Changes

5. The new Housing Services Manager has proposed a number of changes, which are intended to deliver better service to customers, improve the service's operational performance, and achieve better value for money.
6. New priorities for the neighbourhood management service will focus upon empty homes management, rent arrears recovery, tenancy enforcement, tenant participation, site management, closer working with the sheltered housing service and complex case resolution. The neighbourhood management team will lose responsibility for responsive repair inspection and ordering, and housing allocations. The service will be managed by two Area Team Leaders.

7. Housing allocations will be transferred to the homelessness and housing advice team who will take on a broader housing options role, moving from the traditional reactive statutory homelessness service towards more active prevention of homelessness, making better use of the Council's own housing stock and the private housing sector. This team will also assume responsibility for the development of a choice based lettings scheme.
8. Tenant participation will be integrated into the mainstream housing management service and the two Area Team Leaders will share lead responsibility for the development of tenant participation in the district.
9. The number of sheltered housing area managers will be reduced to reflect the reduction in sheltered scheme and mobile managers as a result of the sheltered housing review.
10. The number of administrative and support posts will be reduced to reflect the reduction in Right To Buy house sales and better use of the Council's ICT systems.

Reorganisation process / timetable

11. Initial staff briefings were held on 25 November and 1 December 2005 and the staff consultation period will run through to January 2006. Discussions with trade union representatives are ongoing. The detailed proposals will be circulated to staff after Cabinet has considered this matter.
12. The proposed reorganisation deletes a number of posts but creates a number of new ones. Recruitment to new posts will commence in January 2006, and in line with the Council's redundancy policy, recruitment will initially be ringfenced to those employees who are at risk of redundancy.
13. It is hoped that the new organisational arrangements will be introduced no later than April 2006.

Financial Implications

14. The reorganisation proposals will result in a net reduction of 4.8 posts with a consequent estimated annual saving of £110,000. Redundancy and early retirement costs will depend upon the application of the Council's redundancy policy but are estimated (at highest cost) to be up to £70,000.

Recommendations

15. Cabinet is recommended to:
 - (a) Agree the next stage of the Housing Service reorganisation as set out in the report
 - (b) Agree that detailed process, assimilation and redundancy issues, including the deletion and creation of posts, arising from the review of Housing Services be delegated to the Director of Housing and Environmental Services with HR advice, in consultation with the Housing and Resources & Staffing portfolio holders.

Background Papers: Previous report to Cabinet July 2005

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