



Classification	Item No.
Open / Closed	

To:	Councillor Rafiq, Executive Member Corporate Affairs
Meeting date:	30 July 2021
Title of report:	Restructure of Council Housing Needs and Options Team – Post Consultation final proposals
From	Councillor Cummins, Executive Member Housing
Decision Type:	Council Non Key Decision
Ward(s) to which report relates	

Executive Summary:

A restructure of the Housing Needs and Options service has been proposed in order to create a new team called Homelessness and Housing Options. The new service is proposed to reflect the changing nature of demand and contribute towards the Council savings target of £250 000 from housing services in 2021/22.

A period of 30 days consultation on proposals is now complete and staff feedback has been considered. This report sets out final proposals as a basis for implementation. It includes responses to issues raised by staff and proposals to delete the following posts in order to achieve the target of c£200 000 savings as planned:

- Service Manager – Accommodation and SCIL
- 3 x Accommodation co-ordinators
- 1.5 reception cover (Bury ACES)
- Administrator – Accommodation team (Fixed term contract)
- 0.5 FTE Handyman

Key considerations

A set of restructure proposals for the Housing Needs and Options team were approved in May 2021 as a basis for 30 days consultation with staff and the Trades Unions during June 2021. The proposals involved the integration of the two teams within the service into a single structure and deletion of the following posts on the grounds of redundancy:

- Service Manager – Accommodation and SCIL
- 1 x Accommodation co-ordinator
- 1.5 reception cover (Bury ACES)
- 1 Handyman (Fixed term contract)
- Administrator – Accommodation team (Fixed term contract)
- Administrator – Vacancies - Housing assessment

In addition it was proposed to provide wider capacity to Housing Services through:

- Creation of a new post of Housing Development and Systems Coordinator which will work across the whole housing portfolio
- redeployment of the Accommodation Team Leader to Urban Renewal to prevent homelessness within the private sector rented sector, as part of the new neighbourhood model
- creation of a new role of Housing Options Co-ordinator, ringfenced to the Housing Advisors and Resettlement workers

This report summarises feedback received during the consultation period and final proposals as a result.

The final structure will be included in the wider restructure of the Business Growth and Infrastructure department which is subject to a separate review at this time.

1. Consultation

Proposals were approved by Members in May 2021 as a basis for 30 days consultation with affected staff and the Trades Unions during June 2021. The consultation process involved:

- A briefing to the whole service from the DCE
- Weekly Q&A updated by Head HR
- 121s with the Head of HR and DCE, for staff who requested them
- A team meeting with those most affected
- Review of further feedback submissions made including volumetric data

A copy of the final Q&A log is appended. A separate, detailed response to the Accommodation team was provided to the Service Manager direct.

In summary, key issues raised by the team include concerns relating to:

- the risk of the Council of the loss of specialist accommodation capacity generally and potential impact this may have on statutory demand volumes

- the need to more clearly reflect the Children's HEN service within the future service functions, including the financial benefit of the internal SLA
- the extent of administration reductions in the context of demand
- the feasibility of reducing Handymen capacity by one third
- The need to reflect the relationship between this service and the OCO Integrated Commissioning Officer which leads on specialist supported accommodation.

2. Wider Context – review of housing services

During the period of consultation the next stage of development of the Business Growth and Investment (BGI) departmental structure has been developed. This includes policy and structural changes to provide the skills and capacity needed for the Council to lead the delivery of the new Housing Strategy.

Associated proposals now subject to consultation which particularly impact this structure include:

- A New Assistant Director Housing into which new post of Head Homelessness will report
- a number of investments have now been proposed in specialist skills and capabilities, although funding pressure of £200 000 now exists to meet the scale of proposed investments.

3. Consultation response and Final Proposals

All consultation feedback has been reviewed in the round and against the wider direction for Housing Services which is now determined within the separate report that has been agreed by the Council's Cabinet.

The work of the accommodation team in particular has been further understood and, for the record, is hugely valued as an important part of the strategy to prevent demand. It is important to be clear that these proposals do not remove these functions but incorporate them within a new model of homeless prevention delivery, in particular:

- The neighbourhood model of public services, which will seek to integrate and connect all public services (including housing) to take early intervention and join-up the totality of resources available to support an individual eg housing, offender management, anti poverty work and substance misuse
- The clear pathways and newly funded provision for non-statutory provision which are now in place for all levels of need within the Housing Options service itself– ie 40 emergency bed spaces for single people who are currently outside of the Council's statutory duty, funded via GMCA and A Bed Every Night or MHCLG via the Rough Sleeping Initiative.

The Children's HEN function will continue and new Head of Service will work with the residual Accommodation Co Ordinators and Children's Services to agree how best discharged against the requirements of the departmental SLA.

The risk of making capacity reductions in the context of the cohort of vulnerable service users is understood but must be managed against available resources and the wider priorities within the housing strategy which are to:

- Ensure that housing is engaging with local communities to deliver what is needed.
- make the Council more visible and accountable for leading on Housing.
- Create effective delivery actions in order to make the Housing Strategy meaningful and capable of making change happen, in particular building new homes.
- Create efficiencies in housing operations that enable more to be done with an agreed savings target, currently £250,000.
- Broaden the Council's housing partnership and collaboration approach to all relevant housing organisations.
- Improve the Council's evidence-based analysis of housing related performance especially in relation to the client function of its Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) and Tenant Management Organisation (TMO).
- Ensure that the Council's housing related statutory responsibilities are fulfilled.

On balance, the majority of original proposals have therefore been upheld but some changes have been made to the detail of the structure, according to staff feedback. In order to accommodate some of these changes it is proposed that some additional voluntary exit requests are accepted.

Final proposals are described below.

3.1 Following proposals confirmed for implementation.

The following original proposals will proceed to implementation

- The following posts will be deleted on the grounds of **redundancy**.
 - Service Manager – Accommodation and SCIL
 - 1 x Accommodation co-ordinator (Vacant)
 - The fixed term Administrator – Accommodation team and 1.5 reception cover (Bury ACES) will conclude
- the following posts will be subject to **redeployment**:
 - the post of Accommodation Team Leader will be deleted and the post holder redeployed to the Private Sector Housing Team
 - the post of Housing Assessment / IT Development Officer will be deleted and the post holder redeployed to Housing Development & Systems Coordinator
- a new role of **Housing Options Co-ordinator** to be created at a Grade 10 level, ringfenced to all Housing Advisors and Resettlement workers
- other staff assimilations to proceed as described in the original report

The removal of pool cars and rationalisation of on call payments will also proceed as proposed. The changes and associated savings are not detailed in this report

as they will be included in separate work to progress the 2019/20 budget option to rationalise discretionary workforce payments across all services.

3.3 Proposals withdrawn

The following original proposals for redundancy withdrawn on basis of staff feedback and opportunity to make savings elsewhere in the structure

- It was proposed to reduce the current Handyman team from 3 FTE to 2 FTE. 1 **Handyman** (Fixed term contract). This proposal has been resisted by staff who believe it removes too much operational resilience and is insufficient capacity for work volumes.

One of the Handymen has requested a change to part time hours. It is recommended on the basis of feedback that that this proposal is accepted as a compromise position.

- The proposed reduction of housing assessment **administrators** was opposed by staff who believe the increasing volume of applications means that a reduction is not manageable. Further, the corporate business support review is now underway which seeks to strengthen business support capacity across the council through the establishment of a single, higher skilled service.

It is therefore proposed to retract the proposal to delete vacant posts but to consider this structure within the corporate review. Clarity about how these functions will be fulfilled in the context of corporate business support arrangements must be achieved before any vacancies may be recruited to substantively

3.4 New Proposals

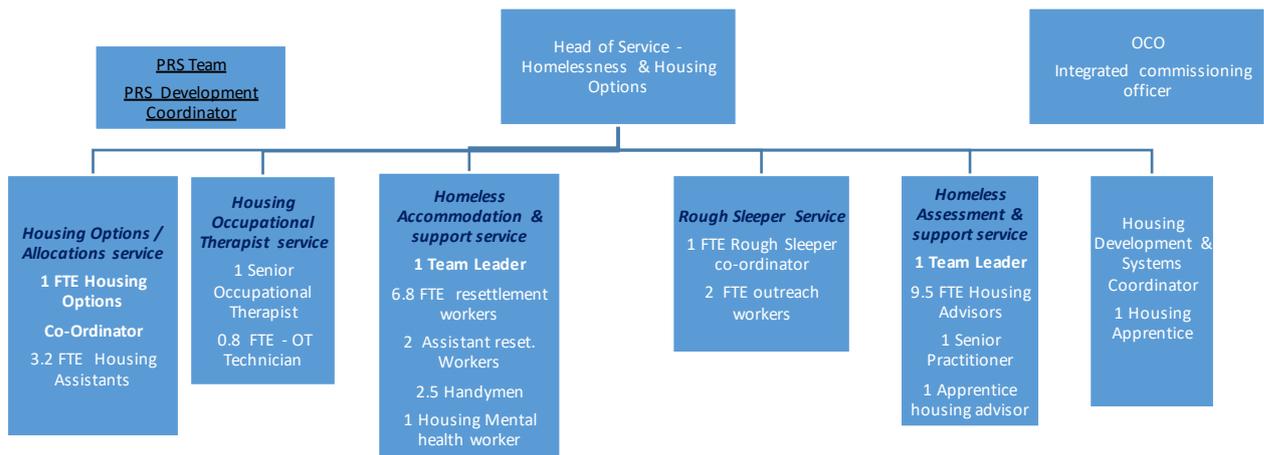
3.4.1 **Two additional requests for voluntary redundancy** from the Accommodation Co-Ordinators have been received. It is recommended that these applications are accepted in order that the savings achieved from this restructure may be increased to offset wider pressures across the whole Housing division. Accepting these applications will require:

- The redeployment of residual two Accommodation Co-Ordinators into the Homeless accommodation and support service (formerly the Community resettlement team)
- Strengthening practitioner capacity in other parts of the service. It is proposed to:
 - recruit to the vacant 0.5 FTE Housing Advisor post to provide additional operational resource in managing the number of cases.
 - Secure two new apprentices which, consistent with the recently updated apprentice strategy, will be ring fenced to Bury residents in the first instance:
 - An apprentice Housing Advisor in the assessment team

- An apprentice development worker to work on systems and process improvements across the whole service
- retain the post of Housing Development and Systems Coordinator fully within this service at this time to drive the efficiency agenda in order that the service can be maintained with lower resources than forecast
- Keep resources under review through a structure 12 month post implementation review which will consider resources against service demand and outcomes

3.4.2 **The Children’s HEN function is confirmed to remain** within the service, with associated funding from the internal SLA. The funding is represented in the final budget position

3.4.3 **The interdependency between the Head of Service Housing Needs and Options and OCO Integrated Commissioning officer is recognised** and reflected in the new structure. This relationship proactively assists in preventing and supporting homelessness, supports strategic and operational rough sleeper provision, supports the Homeless partnership and assists the Head of Service in external bids for funding and facilitates the vital link of relationship provider with external partners, providers and stakeholders.



4 Final costs and savings

The final budget position is a net savings value of £198 448, proposed overleaf and includes:

- Forecast revenue savings of a total of £244 897 from post deletions:
- New costs of £63 449 from additional proposed posts
- Representation of £17 000 SLA income within the service budget, which was excluded from the original position

The full saving will, however, only be realised once implementation costs have been met, as described below. The cost associated with pension strain which will be addressed corporately.

4.1 Summary Savings and Implementation Costs

Post for deletion	Saving £ 000	One-off Redundancy Cost £ 000
Accommodation Co-Ordinator x 3	109 438	34923
Bury ACES administrators	38 093	0
Accommodation administrator	25 395	0
Part time Handyman	14299	0
Service Manager	57 672	22 709 Plus (Plus 127 454 Pension Capital cost)
Total	244 897	57632

In addition there is an existing income budget (which supports the service costs) within the Accommodation Team of £83,000. In 2020/21 this achieved a total of £112, 480, being made up of the Management fee of £56,000 plus quarterly charges for Children's HEN of between £12 - £15k. In the previous year, the quarterly amounts averaged £11k per quarter. If it is assumed that these quarterly charges are sustainable, (at £11k per quarter to be prudent) then the income budget could be increased to £100k. (£56k plus £44k) and this would make available an **additional £17,000** to support service costs.

4.2 Summary additional costs

New costs of £63 449 will be deducted from the savings balance as follows:

- Appointment to the 0.5 FTE (Grade 9) vacant Housing Advisor post = £18,239
- 2 x housing apprentices: £45,210 (£17,190 + 31.5% x 2)

5 Implementation

The new service will be implemented immediately on approval, with effect from 1 August 2021. Key activities to be progressed from this date will include:

- Implementation of all redundancy and assimilation arrangements, no later than 31 August 2021
- a piece of team visioning and team building work to establish relationships and a common ethos for the new service, including clarity of roles, training, responsibilities, systems/processes and behaviours

- redeployment of the two Accommodation Co-Ordinators into the New Homeless Accommodation and support service team including resolution of Children's HEN arrangements within the team.
- Implementation of the new Housing Options Co-ordinator, ring fenced to Housing Advisors and Resettlement workers
- Recruitment of vacant posts within the new structure including apprenticeships.
- a secondee Mental Health Worker to be sought from within the One Commissioning Organisation
- the grades of all posts in the new structure will also be validated during implementation

The exit terms for the proposed redundancy of the Service Manager – Accommodation & SCIL is, however, a matter of full council approval under the terms of the Localism Act. It is also proposed that this post is required for an extended period to oversee the integration of accommodation functions into the new team and to proactively complete the close down of the Gateway programme and other potential programmes and provision as a result of the alignment of services before departure. It is therefore proposed that:

- Redundancy arrangements for this post are proposed to full council in September 2021
- The departure of this post holder is agreed for 31 December 2021 subject to the successful handover of former Accommodation functions including asylum and immigration to the new Head of Service

5 Recommendation

It is recommended that:

- the proposed structure and staffing changes set out in section 3 are approved for immediate implementation
- the redundancy terms for the post of Service Manager – Accommodation & SCIL is recommended to full Council for approval. Under the terms of our pay policy statement pursuant s38 of the Localism Act 2011, all severance packages (including pension costs) that exceed £100 000 are considered by Council.

Community impact/links with Community Strategy

The proposals in this report are directly aligned with the Lets do it! Strategy; in particular, the delivery of the sister housing strategy which is referenced in the overarching report and the development of the neighbourhood model through the updated job descriptions of Housing advisors and dedicated capacity to prevent homelessness within the private rented sector.

Equality Impact and considerations:

Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;*
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;*
- (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.*

The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services.

Equality Analysis	<i>Please provide a written explanation of the outcome(s) of either conducting an initial or full EA.</i>
The proposals in this report strengthen the Council's leadership of inclusion within the borough, in particular support to the socio-economically deprived people who are defined within our local Inclusion Strategy as a protected characteristic	

**Please note: Approval of a cabinet report is paused when the 'Equality/Diversity implications' section is left blank and approval will only be considered when this section is completed.*

Assessment of Risk:

The following risks apply to the decision:

Risk / opportunity	Mitigation

Consultation:

Proposals were subject to 30 days consultation with affected staff in accordance with the council's restructure procedure.

Legal Implications:

The Council will ensure compliance with all legislative requirements to those on permanent and fixed term contracts. All policies and procedures will be complied with in accordance with current Council policy and in conjunction with the employee consultation tool kit.

The Bury pay policy statement sets out the Council's policy regarding remuneration of officers in accordance with s 38 of the Localism Act 2011 and associated statutory guidance. Our pay policy states any severance package including pension costs exceeding £100k is subject to the agreement of full Council.

Financial Implications:**Report Author and Contact Details:**

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