

## **REPORT TO Executive**

**Date of Meeting: 26 January 2016**

**Report of: Assistant Director Housing**

**Title: STAFFING WITHIN THE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT TEAM**

### **Is this a Key Decision?**

No

### **Is this an Executive or Council Function?**

Council

#### **1. What is the report about?**

1.1 This report sets out a proposal to increase the staffing establishment within the Housing Development Team for an additional full time post to assist with the reduction in the number of empty homes working on a shared basis for the Council and for Mid Devon District Council.

#### **2. Recommendations:**

2.1 That the Council be RECOMMENDED to agree to an increase in the establishment of the Housing Development Team; the contract term in accordance with the legal agreement with Mid Devon District Council.

#### **3. Reasons for the recommendation:**

3.1 There has been an additional pull on resources within the Housing Development team due to extra work taken on by the team in areas such as private sector housing policy and client lead for Exeter Active. As a result there is a need for an additional resource to maintain the Council's work on tackling empty homes, which continues to be an important element of our overall housing strategy.

3.2 The Council has recently been approached by Mid Devon District Council with a view to pooling financial resources to create a joint post that would also undertake work for them. The Council currently provide a similar service to East Devon District Council providing an officer to work in East Devon two days a week.

3.3 This request from Mid Devon, alongside other demands on the Housing Development Team, has led to resources being reviewed with the result that it is proposed to advertise a full time position to provide an officer to work in Exeter three days a week and Mid Devon two days per week. The Council would be reimbursed the cost of the Mid Devon element of the service via a service level agreement.

#### **4. What are the resource implications including non financial resources.**

4.1 The new post will be a Housing Development Officer on an established Grade 8.

4.2 The net overall employee costs for the Housing Development team will not be increased as a result of the new Grade 8 Housing Development Officer post. This is because the net cost (cost less recharge to Mid Devon) equates to the former budget provision for the Grade 4 Housing Development Assistant post, which has now been removed from the establishment.

4.3 The proposed increase to the establishment will be cost-neutral. The post will be full time for as long as the arrangement with Mid Devon remains in place. If this agreement is ended the post will be reviewed.

**5. Section 151 Officer comments:**

5.1 The proposed budgets for 2016/17 reflect the desired changes to the Housing Development Team, as set out in the report. Providing the post is shared with Mid Devon District Council and costs recharged accordingly, the net additional cost to the Council is nil. However, in the event that Mid Devon District Council withdraw from this arrangement, the continuation of this full-time post would need to be reviewed.

**6. What are the legal aspects?**

6.1 A formal legal agreement will be drawn up by Legal Services and entered into with Mid Devon District Council which will set out the detail and payment pro-rata for the costs of providing an officer to work at Mid Devon for two days a week.

**7. Monitoring Officer's comments:**

7.1 Subject to the legal agreement being finalised this report raises no issues for the Monitoring Officer.

**8. Report details:**

8.1 The report detail has been set out in paragraph 3 of this report.

8.2 The request is to increase the establishment of the Housing Development Team by one full time officer. The cost of this post would be covered within existing budgets. No additional resources are required. The post will be subject to the approval of a service level agreement with Mid Devon District Council in conjunction with the Corporate Manager Legal Services.

**9. How does the decision contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan?**

9.1 This decision will help ensure that the Council's strategic objectives for housing continue to be delivered.

**10. What risks are there and how can they be reduced?**

10.1 A reduction in resources to tackle empty homes could have adverse consequences. The Council recognises that empty properties can have a considerable negative impact upon a local community and can in some circumstances blight an area and the houses in the locality. Empty homes can often attract vandalism and anti-social behaviour which can lead to crime or an increased fear of crime.

10.2 There has been considerable recent government focus on returning empty properties back into use. With housing demand much greater than supply, returning long-term empty properties to use is a necessity for local authorities to help meet housing need.

**11. What is the impact of the decision on equality and diversity; health and wellbeing; safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults, community safety and the environment?**

11.1 Empty homes are a wasted housing resource at a time when there is a significant housing need in the City. By bringing empty properties back into use this will increase the housing stock for the potential benefit of vulnerable sections of the community. Properties left empty can have a detrimental effect on the environment and increase the risk of anti-social behaviour.

**12. Are there any other options?**

12.1 There is the option of not creating an additional post, but this is not supported because of the reasons set out elsewhere in this report.

**Assistant Director**

**Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 (as amended)**

**Background papers used in compiling this report:-**

None

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