

REPORT TO EXECUTIVE

Date of Meeting: 8 November 2016

Report of: Assistant Director – Customer Access

Title: Creation of a Temporary Part Time Housing Needs Administration post.

Is this a Key Decision?

No

Is this an Executive or Council Function?

Executive

1 What is the report about?

1.1 The report sets out the reasoning for and the funding arrangement of a temporary part time administration post in the Housing Needs Team.

2 Recommendations

2.1 The Executive agrees:

- a. A temporary part time post is created in the Housing Needs Team.
- b. That the post uses existing funding within the department.

3 Reasons for the recommendation

3.1 Access to information about a person's previous applications to the Council for Housing is relevant in understanding the needs of the customer. This information is best available alongside existing records where we can be confident that it is up to date and relevant. This requires the existing paper files to be sorted, scanned and catalogued appropriately.

4 What are the resource implications including non-financial resources?

An appropriate job description has been recommended by the HR Business Partner. The post would cost £3,400 for 12 months. There are currently vacant posts in the Housing Needs Structure and the costs of this post will be covered by those vacancies.

The work to be done is time limited as this will end once the backlog of files is complete. It is envisaged that this is a further 12 months' worth of work for one day a week. This provides better value for money than asking an agency to provide a staff resource which is costed at £5,000.

The recent amendment to the organisational change policy has enabled this to be moved forward before the rest of the proposed staffing changes in the Housing Needs Team. The Unions have been consulted and see no issue with the creation of this post.

5 Section 151 Officer comments

On the basis that the temporary post will be funded from existing budgets, this raises no financial concerns.

6 What are the legal aspects?

There are no relevant considerations.

7 Monitoring Officer's comments

This report raises no issues for concern to the Monitoring Officer

8 Report details

In 2015 the Housing Needs IT system was replaced with a system with integrated document management. This enabled a paperless approach to case management and a reduction in stationary costs for the production and maintenance of 1,500 new files a year.

As part of the implantation existing case data was transferred to the new system but there was no resource for the scanning of existing paperwork as this was planned on an ad hoc basis as needed.

Due to data retention good practice there has been an annual review of files to move closed files to storage and then destroy them after the required period. This has previously been completed by agency staff or through existing staff overtime.

An opportunity became available to offer work experience to a person with a protected characteristic initially supported through St Loyes to move towards employment when managing a disability. The Housing Needs Team took this opportunity to offer a placement and at the same time digitalise the existing paper file to provide benefit of access to the information and easier to manage data retention procedures.

This work experience was very successful with both the candidate and the support worker highlighting a good fit and positive integration into the team. The supported scheme came to an end and the decision was made to continue the arrangement informally until a more formal arrangement could be determined.

During this period there have been concerns that the arrangement could be deemed exploitative and a temporary part time role is suggested as the most appropriate mechanism for continuation. The job description and person specification was put together by the HR team to assist in this specific case. It is suggested that the post be advertised internally with the addition option for people currently completing work experience be allowed to apply.

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

9.1 The creation of a post will support the Council's objectives of reducing waste in the current work processes.

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

10.1 There are no direct risks associated with this report.

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 Not applicable.

12 Are there any other options?

Failure to resolve this issue will result in the work experience placement coming to an end and the work in processing the files coming to an end. The required processing of files and sifting for disposal or scanning would need to be found within existing staffing hours and is low priority. This would take skilled housing officers away from their work helping people to resolve their housing needs, which would not be an efficient use of resources or remain incomplete until the deadline for data retention audit was reached.

Assistant Director Customer Access

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

Background papers used in compiling this report:-

None

Contact for enquires:

Democratic Services (Committees)

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