

## EXETER CITY COUNCIL

### SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – RESOURCES 25 NOVEMBER 2009

EXECUTIVE  
8 DECEMBER 2009

#### STAFFING – HOUSING BENEFITS

#### 1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval for an increase in the establishment of the Housing Benefits Team by 1 full time member of staff.

#### 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In previous years the Housing Benefits service has delivered significant efficiency savings resulting in a reduced establishment. However, as a result of the current economic downturn the benefit caseload has risen significantly in recent months. Resulting from this the Housing Benefits service is faced with having to cope with the increased volumes of work whilst maintaining its current good performance standards. As an indication, the Council's benefit caseload has increased from 9,678 in April 2008 to currently stand at 10,330 at the end of September 2009, an increase of almost 7%. The current establishment for benefit assessment staff is 21.7 FTE.
- 2.2 The Government has also recognised the pressures that local authorities are facing with regard to their statutory duty of administering housing benefit claims. The Government's Budget Report 2009 announced that it had set aside further additional funding as a result of the economic downturn to ensure that local authorities can continue to deliver and improve effective support services for the unemployed. Included within this report was provision for additional administrative subsidy to respond to the expected extra Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit workload in local authorities. It has therefore been agreed that in 2009/10 an additional £30m subsidy in addition to the previously agreed £45m announced in January 2009 will be provided to Local Authorities. The additional amount of funding that Exeter will receive in 2009/10 is £50,249.

#### 3. THE PROPOSAL

- 3.1 In view of the increased workload and the desire to maintain the current good service performance it is proposed that the establishment in the Housing Benefits section is increased by the addition of one full time member of staff.

#### 4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The cost of an additional assessment officer post at Grade 5 including staff oncosts is £22,200 per annum rising to £24,700 per annum at the top of the grade. The additional cost of this post in the current financial year is more than met by the additional administration grant funding that we will receive from the Government.

**5. RECOMMENDATION**

- 5.1 That the Executive be **RECOMMENDED** to approve the creation of an additional post of Benefits Assessment Officer at Grade 5.

HEAD OF TREASURY SERVICES

CORPORATE SERVICES DIRECTORATE

**Local Government (Access to Information ) Act 1985 (as amended)**

**Background papers used in compiling the report:**

None