

EXETER CITY COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE
2 OCTOBER 2007

CREATION OF A NEW HOUSING SOLICITOR POST

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek Members approval for the creation of a new solicitor post to specialise in Housing and Anti Social Behaviour matters.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In 1996 Legal Services took the unusual step of agreeing to re locate the Planning Solicitor to the planning office. The rationale at the time was to encourage a much closer working relationship between the two services and ensure the planning solicitor was involved with planning cases at a very early stage.
- 2.2 Although the Planning Solicitor sits with the planners, the daily management and supervision falls necessarily to the Head of Legal Services. Planning Services provides a separate office for this solicitor since he/or she is required, at the discretion of the Head of Legal Services, to deal with non-planning work and occasionally, matters of a confidential nature.
- 2.3 This arrangement has worked particularly well. The client satisfaction with the legal service provided is extremely high and Legal Services is looking to replicate this type of service delivery arrangement within Housing Services.

3. THE PROPOSAL

- 3.1 In July 2006, the Council introduced a new anti-social behaviour policy and became one of the first local authorities to sign up to the Government's Respect Standard for Housing Management. A new Neighbourhood Management policy was also introduced in October 2006.
- 3.2 To assist with the above, additional resources were made available within the Tenancy Services team to ensure these polices could be introduced effectively so that the Council's tenants would see an impact within a relatively short space of time.
- 3.3 New anti-social behaviour recording software was implemented in November 2006. This allows all cases of anti-social behaviour on the Council's estates to be logged and tracked and helps Housing Services to prioritise resources accordingly.

3.4 Increased awareness of anti-social behaviour amongst the general public and higher profile activity by Tenancy Services staff through neighbourhood inspections and joint visits with the Police has further increased our tenants' expectations that reports of anti-social behaviour will be dealt with quickly and effectively. Over the past six months the Council has effectively used a range of legal powers available to it through the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 to stop anti-social behaviour and prevent problems re occurring. Each case needing such action is labour intensive and requires significant officer time from both housing and legal officers.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1

POST	PAY SCALE	COST PER ANNUM £ (including on cost)
Housing Solicitor	Grade 12	£49,970 (top of the scale)

4.1 It is proposed that the cost of the new Housing Solicitor would fall to be recharged to the Housing Revenue Account. There are sufficient reserves available within the HRA to fund this post without affecting other services. However, where work is undertaken for the Homelessness and Housing Advice team, a recharge would be made to the general fund as at present.

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Members are asked to approve the creation of a Housing Solicitor post the arrangements for which shall reflect those in place in respect of the Planning Solicitor post.

6.2 Members are asked to agree this new post should be funded from the Housing Revenue Account where appropriate.

Head of Legal Services
Head of Housing Services
20/9/07

CORPORATE SERVICES DIRECTORATE

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)
Background papers used in compiling this report

None