

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - COMMUNITY
15 JANUARY 2008

EXECUTIVE
22 JANUARY 2008

HOUSING OPERATIONS MANAGER POST (CE06126)

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek Member approval to re-create the post of Housing Operations Manager within the Housing Services Unit.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The post of Housing Operations Manager previously existed within the structure of the Housing Services Unit until September 2003. At that time the senior management structure within the unit was as Appendix I of this report.
- 2.2 The post was responsible for the overall management of the landlord functions within the unit and was funded from the Housing Revenue Account. As well as line managing the operational managers within the service the post also had direct responsibility for a number of services, including income collection and sheltered housing.
- 2.3 Following the resignation of the postholder a review was undertaken of the housing structure and subsequently the post was deleted through the delegated powers procedure. Part of the funding for the post was used to create a new post of Performance and Projects Manager within the housing service.

3. HOUSING INSPECTION AND SERVICE IMPROVEMENT

- 3.1 Throughout 2007 the Housing Services Unit has been undertaking a range of service reviews to self assess against the Audit Commission's Key Lines of Enquiry documents (KLOEs). As a result a number of service improvements have been made and actions taken to ensure a reasonable level of compliance.
- 3.2 To test how the service compares with the KLOEs a mock inspection of the Council's landlords functions was undertaken by an external agency, the Housing Quality Network, during the week commencing 1 October 2007. The inspection demonstrated that we provide a good overall quality of service with high levels of customer satisfaction. However, in order to further improve services the inspectors have also made a series of recommendations to ensure the Council achieves a higher score in the future, particularly if the Audit Commission's Housing Inspectorate decide to undertake a real inspection in the next few years. Indeed, from 2008 the Housing Inspectorate are beginning to pilot 'snap' inspections similar to those undertaken by OFSTED in the education sector, meaning landlords will no longer have a long lead in time to prepare.
- 3.3 As well as increased pressure from our regulators to drive up the quality of housing services, the expectations of our tenants has also risen. The Council as a landlord is now expected to respond more effectively to issues such as anti-social behaviour and

estate management problems. A more pro-active strategy is expected to ensure services meet the needs of our tenants and that services demonstrate real value for money. A robust Housing Revenue Account Business Plan and Asset Management Strategy are also essential, with tenants and leaseholders playing an even bigger part in their development.

- 3.4 Given these pressures, together with the recommendations arising from our mock housing inspection it is essential that the Council commit sufficient resources to the service to help drive service reviews and make the necessary changes that result in real value for money improvements. There is also a need for stronger management of the landlord functions.

4. PROPOSAL

- 4.1 To help provide stronger operational and strategic management of the Council's landlord services it is proposed to recreate the post of Housing Operations Manager and reinstate a Strategic Housing Management Team similar to that shown in Appendix I. This new post and structure will provide increased drive and motivation within the service to assess, develop and implement the recommendations from the mock housing inspection. It will also enhance co-operation between the operational and strategic arms of the housing unit to help meet overall aims and objectives.

- 4.2 The Housing Operations Manager will work closely with the Head of Housing, operational managers, staff, members and tenants to agree a robust service improvement plan that results in further improvements to our landlord services and ensure we provide value for money in everything we do.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The post will be funded from within the Housing Revenue Account. Subject to a job evaluation assessment it is anticipated the post will be evaluated at Grade 14 (£40,101 - £43,479). These additional costs can be found from within the existing budget without any material effect to other services or the housing capital programme. However, as the post develops and the other recommendations are implemented it is expected that further efficiency savings will be found that will not only help to cover the costs of this post but assist in improving other aspects of the service.

6. RECOMMENDED

- (1) That Scrutiny agrees and Executive approves that the post of Housing Operations Manager (CE06126) be reinstated to the structure.

HEAD OF HOUSING SERVICES

S:LP/Committee/108SCC9
3.1.08

COMMUNITY & ENVIRONMENT DIRECTORATE

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)
Background papers used in compiling this report: None