

<b>Meeting:</b>	<b>Organisational Development</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>24 November 2014</b>
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Housing Strategy &amp; Enabling Service Review</b>		
<b>Report Of:</b>	<b>Corporate Director of Services and Neighbourhoods</b>		
<b>Wards Affected:</b>	<b>N/A</b>		
<b>Key Decision:</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Budget/Policy Framework:</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Helen Chard (Housing Strategy &amp; Enabling Service Manager)</b>		
	<b>Email: Helen.Chard@gloucester.gov.uk</b>	<b>Tel:</b>	<b>396534</b>
<b>Appendices:</b>	<b>1. Service Review Proposal for Housing Strategy &amp; Enabling 2. Table of Consultation queries and responses &amp; full detail of 2 consultation responses</b>		

## FOR GENERAL RELEASE

### 1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to bring before Organisational Development Committee the proposed new structure for the Housing Strategy and Enabling Service in Appendix 1, and share the consultation responses that have been received, and consideration of these proposals.

### 2.1 Recommendations

- 2.1 Organisational Development Committee are asked to **RESOLVE** that the proposals for the restructure of the Housing Strategy and Enabling Team be approved and implemented.

### 3.0 Background and Key Issues

- 3.1 The Service restructure proposals reflect a number of changes that have occurred in recent years, including the changes within the development sector affecting housing delivery; changes in partnership working with statutory and voluntary sector partners; a decrease with the compilation of statistical housing data for Government and budgetary constraints.
- 3.2 Page 2-4 of Appendix 1, sets out in more detail the case for the restructure, and also reflects on the changing nature by which capital investment in housing is secured; the anticipated stock transfer of the City Council's housing stock to Gloucester City Homes and loss of workload associated with acquisition and disposal of council stock; and support arrangements affecting the way the housing services commissioned and operated.
- 3.3 The skill-set required to fulfil Enabling roles also continues to change, and so ensuring the continuous professional development of team members going forward

is vital. Given the role Enabling Officers undertake in negotiating/facilitating on projects typically between £0.5 & £25M It is important that Officers are professional, graded and empowered to take appropriate decisions; that they have a good understanding of housing and planning guidance or other associated legislation (e.g. Care, Procurement, Equalities), and the ability to respond in a more competitive business focused environment, with improved project management and commissioning skills.

- 3.4 The team currently operates by means of covering specific specialist areas of housing, this means that the workloads of team members can vary significantly and the workflow can be affected by any absences. The approach being promoted in the attached report moves team members toward a more generic style of working, and this anticipates individual team members being required to initiate or respond to a broader set of service requests. It is envisaged that this will create the need for some additional training, much of which could be through skill transfer within the team or ad-hoc courses as appropriate. Similarly, adapting existing skills, such as the ability to review and evaluate available evidence/literature/data and apply this approach to new work areas and initiate new provision or service improvement will be encouraged.
- 3.5 In addition, it is thought that for the purposes of career development, the more generic approach will offer a greater knowledge of wider strategic housing and development matters. Also the broader team member knowledge will most likely create better integration of specialist housing requirements into bricks and mortar initiatives.

#### **4.0 Alternative Options Considered**

- 4.1 The main alternative is the current status quo, where specialist work areas remain; however this seems less equitable where at times certain work areas are very resource intensive and others less so.
- 4.2 The responses received from the Strategy and Enabling Team have been considered and are included in Appendix 3

#### **5.0 Reasons for Recommendations**

- 5.1 To create a fairer way of distributing the work requirements for the team; to acknowledge that some areas of work have and will continue to significantly decrease; and to take opportunity to realign the resources to roles where the best corporate and strategic housing outcomes can be generated.

#### **6.0 Future Work and Conclusions**

- 6.1 The responses from the team generated very relevant matters for consideration and have been welcomed. Some of the responses were about clarification, roles and functions, which will be provided within any forthcoming job descriptions. The case for the retention of the Enabling Assistant continuing within the new structure, rather than the duties being absorbed within the F or G grade roles has been considered very carefully. Due to the extent of direction and supervision already necessary through the senior officer, it was thought that changes to process could be effective in maintaining good quality interactions with our partners and create the required

savings. It will be important for the Service Manager to ensure these new processes are embedded effectively in future service arrangements. In addition to the loss of work from the Enabling Assistant role associated with acquisitions and disposals of housing stock that will be undertaken in future via Gloucester City Homes, it remains the case that the position is seen as unviable.

## **7.0 Financial Implications**

7.1 The proposals will create additional budget savings, beyond those secured in 2013-14 where an Enabling Assistant (0.5 FTE C Grade) wasn't replaced. The savings in total would be approximately £31,300 going forward.

(Financial Services have been consulted in the preparation this report.)

## **8.0 Legal Implications**

8.1 There are no legal implications associated with this proposal, other than the usual matters to considered associated with potential redundancy/redeployment.

(Legal Services have been consulted in the preparation this report.)

## **9.0 Risk & Opportunity Management Implications**

9.1 Whilst the overall team size is proposed to decrease, it is envisaged that there will be sufficient capacity to undertake the statutory aspect of the team's work, including the production of Housing and Homelessness strategies and Need Assessments. The proposals also seek to realign some of the team resources to those officers with a focus on delivering affordable homes.

## **10.0 People Impact Assessment (PIA):**

An initial screening assessment has been undertaken and no negative impacts have been identified.

## **11.0 Other Corporate Implications**

### Community Safety

11.1 Part of the remit of the Service is to consider housing proposals their layout and design and housing tenure, and how proposals fit within different localities within the City. The proposals seek to redirect team resources to ensure these matters are adequately addressed.

### Sustainability

11.2 The sustainability of housing is promoted through the Draft Housing Strategy and in negotiations with Developers based on our Planning Policies, to ensure we are able to seek good design, energy efficiency, minimise fuel poverty, and create communities where people want to live now and in the future.

### Staffing & Trade Union

11.3 The proposals have previously been shared with Employee Forum and the Trades Union Forum and comments invited.

**Background Documents:** None