

Review of Housing Strategy & Enabling

A proposal document for consultation

Introduction

The Council Plan is challenging us to deliver the council's priorities and demonstrate continuous improvement to ensure we offer high quality services; whilst remaining within budgetary constraints. The new Council Plan recognises the importance of housing interventions and wishes to see the implementation of a new housing strategy, delivered with some rigour, most importantly seeing the delivery of new homes in the City, including affordable homes to meet housing need.

Why is restructuring needed?

The Strategy and Enabling team has been successful with the delivery of affordable homes in a variety of settings, from general needs to specialist housing provision and in 2010 was the 2nd best performing Local Authority in the South West. (Measure no longer available)

Informally adjustments have been made within the team to adapt to changing market conditions affecting the construction sector and those wishing to rent or purchase, by encouraging or promoting a broader range of housing products. Similarly, it has sought to adjust service delivery arrangements to minimise homelessness, rather than offer only reactive homelessness services.

Capital investment options for housing initiatives have, and continue to change, expanding options with non-traditional partners, and creating a need to forge new relationships. Gloucester needs to focus on all methods of securing investment or revenue support, not only utilising government grants when they are available. There needs to be a more pro-active approach to engaging with organisations, businesses and communities to deliver mutually beneficial services and high quality homes for residents.

Housing services don't remain static, they adapt and flex, as do those of our statutory, voluntary and other partners; and understanding others' objectives and ensuring our plans dovetail to best effect, will ensure greater benefits for current and future residents of the city.

Given the value associated with investment decisions concerning housing for Developers, Providers and the Council, it is critical that the team demonstrates a sound working knowledge of housing, planning, legal and financial contexts to operate professionally and ensure value for money and probity.

It is timely that we review the way we operate, maximise the skills within the team and ensure we are structured as efficiently as possible to fulfil our housing and broader corporate ambitions.

Key outcomes

As a consequence of the review, the aim is for the Strategy & Enabling team to be fully equipped to deliver housing and broader council objectives, in what has become a more competitive business environment. Enabling Officers should be able to demonstrate an understanding of how best to commission services and secure the best possible outcomes; adapt with the changing business needs of existing and non-

traditional providers to maximise investment in best quality homes, housing services and neighbourhoods for the benefit of tenants and the wider community.

Team members should be able to demonstrate their flexibility and able to respond to varied work requirements across all areas of the Service, and apply their professional skills to a range of housing projects.

Proposals

At present the Service operates largely with team members operating within specialist areas of housing for e.g. development via the Planning system; specialist accommodation, homelessness, projects and maintaining an appropriate evidence base.

Whilst these specialisms have worked well, with individual officers gaining very in-depth knowledge on certain aspects of housing; what this doesn't allow for, is the uneven volume or flow of work relating to each specialism, and this may also be exacerbated where there is an absence. With expertise being broadened and developed across the team, this should lead to more flexibility to respond where the needs are greatest and allow for greater personal development.

Best practice around housing has seen a move away from specialist accommodation to using general needs accommodation, more often with personalised support linked to the individual. Therefore the nature of our involvement with other organisations, collaborating on specialist provision has significantly reduced and as a consequence, the viability of a specialist role is difficult to justify. An understanding of specialisms relative to particular groups is something that could be incorporated into a generic role.

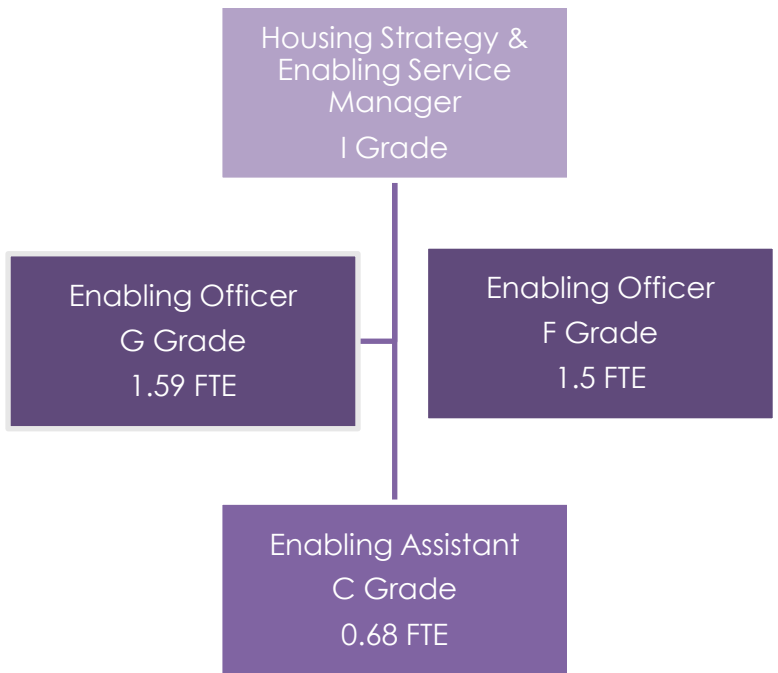
As a consequence of changes in the last few years, the recommendations are to work toward a more 'generic' Enabling Officer role(s). Such a generic role, would see all officers contribute toward the maintenance of a broad statistical housing evidence base; maintain a baseline knowledge of all strategic housing matters; and have the ability to evaluate evidence and good practice, to innovate and develop housing initiatives that improve existing provision, performance or quality. Enabling Officers should be able to evidence, articulate and enthuse others with their ideas, through presentations with Providers and other stakeholders, in meetings and in the form of bids to funding organisations.

More recently, we have seen mandatory government returns reduced, with a decrease in the volume and complexity of data required. It is also very likely should the stock transfer of the Council's housing stock proceed, that the requirement for the team to respond to requests for properties to be bought back, or requests such as those received through the statutory right of first refusal will cease and also transfer to Gloucester City Homes (GCH). Much of this work is undertaken by the Enabling Assistant. A large part of the remaining workload for the Enabling Assistant is concerned with support for S106 compliance, with the support of a more senior officer. Whilst the administrative support provided has been useful alongside a part-time Enabling Development officer, the proposals below would see the creation of two full-time generic roles, which should enable post-holders to have sufficient capacity to undertake their own record keeping, monitoring and stakeholder communications.

Whilst the aim is for a more generic approach across the whole team, the proposals still recognise it to be appropriate to have an identified lead, concerning homelessness initiatives, and our interactions with homelessness Providers. This is due to the breadth of homelessness legislation; knowledge regarding associated support needs; the complexities associated and welfare benefits issues for those who are homeless. It is envisaged that an F Grade Enabling role would undertake these duties, but would take on less responsibility in relation to higher financial value project work, procurement or planning work.

Enablers should be able to translate new initiatives into working projects with clear objectives, actions and an assessment of risk. In addition, Enabling Officers should be able to interact with personnel at all levels within our own or external organisations, and be able to present accurate information, or internal use or in public settings.

Existing Structure



Role	Grade	FTE	Total Service Costs
Service Manager	I	1	
Enabling Assistant	C	0.68	
Enabling Officer (Special Needs)	F	0.5	
Enabling Officer (Development)	G	0.59	
Enabling Officer (Homelessness)	F	1	
Enabling Officer (Projects & Communications)	G	1	
			184,300.02

A summary of the current team members' roles and remit is shown below for information.

Job Title	Grade	FTE	Duties
Housing Strategy & Enabling Service Manager	I	1	Developing the City's Housing & Tenancy Strategy, Member of Supporting People Partnership; Lead RP contact, Developing Service Business Plan; Team & Project management/support, Government Consultations & statutory return; Monitoring revenue & capital budgets; Liaison & Project work with GCH; Liaison with Regeneration, Economic Development & Planning.
Enabling Officer (Development)	G	0.59	Reviewing planning applications with affordable housing; negotiating on applications where affordable housing obligations are required; undertaking procurement work where the Council nominates Registered Providers; drafting s106 content for affordable homes; identifying any breaches to planning agreements; liaison with Registered Providers. Affordable Housing Policy content.
Enabling Officer (Projects & Communications)	G	1	Project based work, The Fleece, St Michaels Sq etc. instructing on associated legal agreements, preparation of tender specifications/evaluations; maintenance of statistical evidence base, including Strategic Housing Market Assessment (underpinning JCS); Coordinating consultation arrangements & collation of results; Coordination and update of web-site material for Strategic & Operational Housing services; Liaison with Migration partnerships & Home Office. Coordination of quarterly RP meetings and annual partnership meetings with individual RPs.
Enabling Officer (Special Needs)	F	0.5	Specialist Partnership Liaison for physical and learning disabilities; offenders and drug; mental health; and alcohol matters. Housing contact on Gypsy, Traveller & Travelling Showpeople matters. Equality issues; lettings plans for new developments. Related project work.
Enabling Officer (Homelessness)	F	1	Research homelessness initiatives, propose service improvements, monitor and evaluate outcomes. Raise orders & monitor Homelessness Prevention Grant spend; *submit PIE statutory homelessness returns. Coordinate training activities for homelessness team; Lead on 'gold standard' CLG benchmarking project; Rough Sleepers count; Domestic Abuse sanctuary arrangements and associated financial transactions; *Orders and requisition for Homelessness Services; implementation of new Supporting People proposals affecting Supported Accommodation; Liaison with Homelessness Providers.
Enabling Assistant	C	0.68	Respond to 'Buy Back' requests concerning former council & occasional other stock; coordinating arrangements where purchases are progressed; maintaining records for GIS to maintain an up to date record of all RP stock; responding to freedom of information requests; collating and submitting a range of data for mandatory CLG Housing return; collection of data from RPs to evidence s106 compliance; production of affordable housings stats.

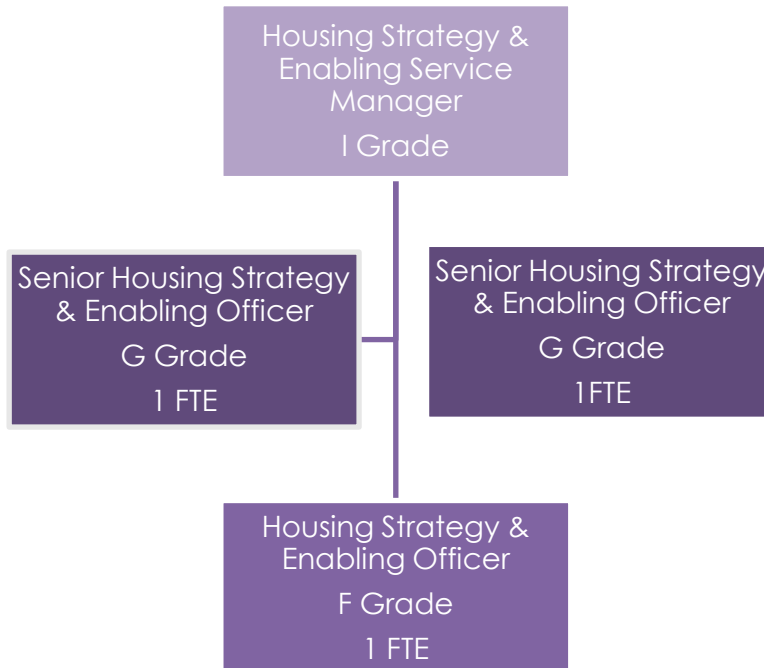
***Recommendation these items are absorbed back within the Operational Housing Team**

The next steps

The proposed structure below retains the Service Manager role, and is supported by three generic enabling officers. Two of the three generic officers will focus on projects of a higher financial value associated with new housing development, developer negotiations, procurement and business development with stakeholders. In addition there is an F graded position that will share many of the generic duties of the first two posts, however there will be less emphasis on higher value development, and will fulfil the strategic homelessness responsibilities.

Proposed Structure

Job Title	Grade	FTE	Grand Total
Housing Strategy & Enabling Service Manager	I	1	
Senior Housing Strategy & Enabling Officer	G	2	
Housing Strategy & Enabling Officer	F	1	
Previous savings (Unfilled Vacancy)			13,857.00
Current Savings			17,432.00
Total Savings			31,289.00



Proposed Generic Enabling Work Remit

The following indicates how the proposal will affect employees

Senior Enabling Officer	G	<p>Reviewing planning applications with affordable housing; negotiating on applications where affordable housing obligations are required; drafting s106 content for affordable homes; undertaking procurement work where the Council nominates Registered Providers; identifying any breaches to planning agreements related to affordable housing; liaison with Registered Providers. Affordable Housing Policy content.</p> <p>Initiating affordable housing projects; instructing on associated legal agreements, preparation of tender specifications/evaluations; maintenance of statistical evidence base, including Strategic Housing Market Assessment (underpinning JCS); Coordinating consultation arrangements & collation of results; Coordination and update of web-site material for Strategic & Operational Housing services; Coordination of quarterly RP meetings and annual partnership meetings with individual RPs; FOI enquiries; equality matters; disability, gypsy and traveller pitch/yard availability. Domestic Abuse sanctuary arrangements and associated financial transactions; offender, drug, alcohol and mental health matters.</p>
Enabling Officer	F	<p>Responding to initial Developer/RP enquiries concerning affordable housing initiatives. Setting out the LA approach to affordable housing requirements on s106 sites; maintenance of statistical evidence base, including City Council affordable housing statistics; coordinating consultation arrangements & collation of results; coordination and update of web-site material for Strategic & Operational Housing services; coordination of quarterly RP meetings and annual partnership meetings with individual RPs; research homelessness initiatives, propose service improvements, monitor and evaluate outcomes. Raise orders & monitor Homelessness Prevention Grant spend; Coordinate training activities for homelessness team; Lead on 'gold standard' CLG benchmarking project (or similar); Rough Sleepers count; Domestic Abuse sanctuary arrangements and associated financial transactions; FOI enquiries; offender, drug, alcohol and mental health matters; equality issues.</p>
Addition to Service Manager duties		Liaison with Migration partnerships & Home Office;

Current Role	Grade	FTE	Outcome	Comments
Housing Strategy & Enabling Service Manager	Grade I	1.0	No change	
<i>Enabling Officer (Development)</i>	<i>Grade G</i>	<i>0.59</i>	<i>Ring fenced to Enabling Officers</i>	<i>JD to be updated</i>
<i>Enabling Officer (Projects & Communications)</i>	<i>Grade G</i>	<i>1.0</i>	<i>Ring fenced to Enabling Officers</i>	<i>JD to be updated Other officers within ring-fence for this position.</i>
<i>Enabling Officer (Homelessness)</i>	<i>Grade F</i>	<i>1.0</i>	<i>Ring fenced to Enabling Officers</i>	<i>JD to be updated</i>
<i>Enabling Officer (Special Needs)</i>	<i>Grade F</i>	<i>0.5</i>	<i>Ring fenced to Enabling Officers</i>	
<i>Enabling Assistant</i>	<i>Grade C</i>	<i>0.68</i>	<i>Displaced</i>	<i>Employee to be registered for redeployment opportunities</i>

It is emphasised that these proposals are for consultation and, as such, final structures and roles may be revised as a result of consultation feedback.

Overview of the process

General support

Any re-organisation can be distressing for those involved and for their colleagues so it is recognised that it will be a difficult time for staff. Support will be provided throughout the process by Development Services Manager or through Human Resources.

The aim at all times will be to provide clear and timely information for everyone involved and to maintain a close and open dialogue with the Trade Unions throughout.

Assimilation

In line with the Council's Organisational Change policy, where all of the following conditions apply, current post holders will be directly assimilated to the equivalent position in the new structure:

The job is essentially the same (at least a 60% match), and

The grade is the same, and

The numbers of posts available is the same or greater than the number of current post holders.

Ring-fence competition

In line with the Council's Organisational Change policy, employees who do not secure a position in the new structure via direct assimilation will be included in a ring-fence if: their posts are deleted, and an alternative position or positions are introduced, and the employee's grade is the same (or one above / below) as the grade of the new post(s) or the employee is at the management tier appropriate to the new post(s).

Redeployment

Any employee who does not secure a post in the new structure or an ongoing position through transfer, change of working arrangements etc will be given notice of redundancy and simultaneously placed on the redeployment register for the period of their notice.

Selection process

There will be a consistent, robust recruitment and selection process in the event of any unforeseen vacancies occurring, these vacancies will be advertised internally only initially.

Appeals

Guidance on how to appeal against any stage of this process can be found in the Council's Organisational Change Document, available from Human Resources.

Implications for those affected

We fully appreciate the challenging nature of this process, the anxiety and the uncertainty that may be felt by staff. It is important that we provide help and support throughout this period of change, particularly to those who are directly affected.

If any staff would like an informal discussion about their options, including voluntary redundancy or early retirement please contact HR.

The Council's free, confidential and external counselling service can be contacted on 01452 750586

Timetable

Consultation with SMT Starts **18th August 2014**
Consultation with Staff Starts **27th August 2014**
Trade Union consultation Starts **27th August 2014**
Close of consultation **26th September 2014**
Review of feedback **29th September 2014**
TU Consultation **9th September 2014**
Employee Forum **11th September 2014**
OD Committee **Date to be convened**
Formation of new team Starts **to be confirmed**

How to respond

Please send your comments or questions to:
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