

REVIEW OF HOUSING SERVICES RESTRUCTURE PROPOSALS

1. Context and rationale for the review

Housing Services in Waverley among the very best in the country

- i. The Council expects our Housing Service, like all Council services, to be among the very best in the country. A service that provides accessible and highly responsive services and represents excellent value to local people. Affordable Housing is a key priority in the Council's Corporate Plan reflecting both the scale of opportunity available, and its central role in improving the quality of life of local people, including some of the most vulnerable within our community.

Responding to new legislation and other external drivers

- ii. The service also needs to respond to significant national drivers for change including a raft of new legislation in terms of tackling anti-social behaviour and tenancy fraud, the introduction of Flexible Tenancies, changes to Right to Buy legislation, welfare reform, and the wider localism agenda, all of which will impact upon our services.

The opportunity of once in a generation investment in Council homes

- iii. Historically Waverley's housing services has been starved of resources that has led to under investment in substantial parts of the housing stock. The Council has been at the forefront of the successful national campaign to have the system of funding changed. This has worked to ensure that the rents that local people pay can be reinvested by the Council into local Council housing. As a result, the Council has agreed a 30 year investment strategy that will ensure that all homes meet the Decent Homes Standard by 2015, that surpluses are invested in new affordable housing and in improving the quality of our existing housing stock. This is a huge opportunity for Waverley, and one that needs to be led and underpinned by an excellent housing service.

Developing more integrated solutions in partnership with others

- iv. We need to do more for those people in greatest need and take a fresh look at how we can respond better to those groups that draw a disproportionate level of resources from the Council and other public service providers – such as those families with multiple and complex needs. This will involve working much more closely with other service providers in a spirit of partnership, sharing knowledge and expertise, and finding ways to better co-ordinate and integrate our approach.

- v. We also need to strengthen our partnership with our customers, taking steps to better understand their priorities and needs and providing more opportunities for the co-design of local services.

Providing a first class service to our residents

- vi. To ensure that our landlord services are not just “fit for purpose”, but aspire to provide a first class service to our residents, we need to reconsider how best to provide these services including the organisational structure and posts we need to deliver this.

2. Implementing the improvements required

Proposed improvements across the Housing Service

- i. A stronger and more effective Housing Service in Waverley needs to be underpinned by a much clearer understanding of the needs and aspirations of our customers.
- ii. This greater focus **on customer insight** needs to be embedded in to the work of each of the teams and this must be used to drive further improvements in the design and delivery of our services. For our customer facing teams, this will mean more time out on the estates and more time meeting with our tenants.
- iii. We need to be confident that all our housing services are striving for the highest standards of performance, benchmarking with the best in class, and responding quickly to any signs that performance may not meet expectations. To help with this, all customer facing services will be expected to strengthen their **performance management**. This will include preparing weekly and monthly performance reports setting out progress in terms of the key measures of success relevant to that service.
- iv. Our teams need to better anticipate, not just react, to external challenges impacting on our services. A more **forward looking** and proactive service will help give more time to prepare well for these challenges, as well as scope to position Waverly to make the most of new opportunities (such as new funding or piloting opportunities) coming up on the horizon.
- v. We will strengthen **individual accountability and empowerment**, enabling every one of our staff to feel able to make a positive difference in their area and to feel proud about the contribution they have made. We will also strengthen the relationship between our customers and our front line staff, making it easier for them to contact us and easier for our customers to hold us to account for the actions we take on their behalf. We will also raise our expectations about the role of managers in areas such as two way communications, staff appraisals and staff development.

- vi. We will invest more in the **professional development** of our staff and teams, ensuring that our people have the skills they need to deliver an excellent service. This will include core skills relevant to all teams such as Customer Care.
- vii. We will work in **closer partnership** with other agencies and sectors in meeting the needs of our tenants and service users, sharing and pooling expertise with others, and looking for opportunities for secure a more integrated and streamlined approach to service delivery. We will also strengthen our approach to contract management, developing a partnership ethos alongside clear expectations and robust performance management.
- viii. We will strengthen the contribution that the Housing Service makes to the development of the whole Council, taking a more **active role in corporate groups** and initiatives. We will also find more ways to **celebrate our growing success**, by recognising exceptional performance and regularly testing ourselves and our services with the very best in the sector.

3. Proposed improvements specific to individual teams

Housing Maintenance

- i. The re-financing of our local housing stock, through Housing Revenue Account reform, provides an unprecedented opportunity for investment in Council homes, turning around many years of under-investment. This, coupled with the award of Decent Homes backlog funding, will enable the Council not just to meet the basic Decent Homes standard set out by Government, but to go much further. This will ensure that our properties offer additional modern facilities providing a higher standard of accommodation than has hitherto been the case for many of our residents.
- ii. As a good landlord, the Council will be striving to ensure that our properties are sustainable, inexpensive to heat, and with kitchen facilities catering to the modern family lifestyle, rather than the very small areas originally developed more than 50 years ago. To spend the amounts of money available in a prudent and measured way requires significant planning and monitoring, and the division & delegation of tasks in a structured and logical way.

Housing Management

- iii. To move towards the provision of first class customer services, our housing management team needs to become more pro-active in tenancy and estates management rather than reactive, which tends to be the case at the moment. We need to enable our staff to spend more time out and about, with greater responsibility for specific geographical areas, and empower them to resolve matters at an early stage, before minor issues become entrenched problems. This will need a step change in the way this service is organised.

Income Recovery

- iv. Our present rates of income collection are very good. However, changes to housing benefit, through welfare reform and the introduction of Universal Credit, together, with new legislation on tenancy management indicating a greater need for much closer working between this team and the housing management team to tackle issues such as tenancy fraud.

Policy & Performance

- v. The Policy & Performance team has an increasing workload, preparing and consulting on new policies and practice in response to emerging legislation, and developing more robust performance management arrangements to evidence the effective management of our resources. This team needs to work in close co-operation with that of Tenancy Involvement.

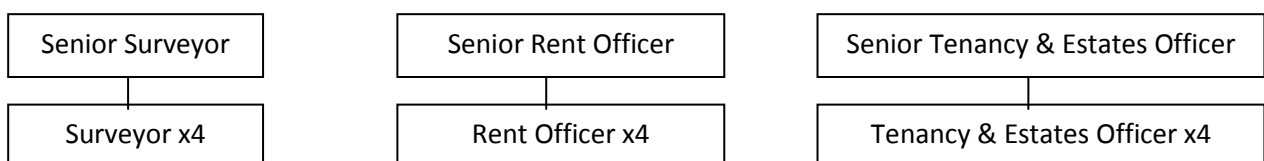
Tenancy Involvement

- vi. Tenant involvement should underpin and drive performance in the Housing Service. At the heart of any successful business is high levels of customer satisfaction, and residents should have greater opportunity to influence the services they receive and drive overall performance improvement. Whilst important for all services, the closest relationship should be with the policy and performance team.

Services based around geographic areas

- vii. The fundamental step change in these proposals is to make the service more easily accessible and accountable to its customers. To do this, the proposed structure will be based upon matched geographical areas; each “patch” will have one Surveyor, one Tenancy and Estates Officer, and one Rent Officer. Each professional discipline (surveying, tenancy & estates and rents) will be managed by a Senior Officer, who will also directly manage a smaller patch of their own.
- viii. The patch sizes have been determined by reference to best practice amongs similar types of service providers. Contrary to current practice, instead of dealing with a number of different officers within teams, residents in any given area will have only one named officer to deal with for all estate and tenancy matters, one for all maintenance matters, and one for rents. The teams for each area will be published in every newsletter.

- ix. It is proposed that the customer facing teams are organised as follows;



- x. Staff will remain in their professional disciplines, with appropriate peer support, whilst simultaneously providing comprehensive cover to a geographic area with their colleagues from the other two disciplines. Initiatives will be developed to break down silo working and encourage cross-discipline co-operation for the benefit of our customers.
- xi. It is envisaged that each officer will have responsibility for a similar number of properties, with each senior holding a smaller patch to reflect their additional line management duties. A map showing how the borough will be divided into patches is attached.

Housing Management and Rents

- xii. It is proposed that both the Senior Rent Officer and the Senior Tenancy and Estates Officer will report to a Landlord Services Manager post, which will also deputise for the Head of Housing. This post will additionally manage the Anti-Social Behaviour Officer and two administrators. It is also proposed that a post of Senior Voids Officer be created (pay band 6) which would operate across all the new area patches to provide additional focus and assurance that a high turnaround of voids is achieved. The post would be located in the new Property Services Team and report to the Property Services Manager.
- xiii. Under these proposals there is no change to the Sheltered Housing Service, which is currently the subject of a separate review.
- xiv. In the rents team, it is proposed that the Senior Rent Accounts Manager post is deleted, because it duplicates, to a large degree, the duties of the Senior Rent Accounts Officer, and only one senior post is required. The Rent Accounts Officers are unaffected by these proposals, but will require intensive training in welfare benefits in the run up to welfare reform.
- xv. The rental systems administrator will be retained.
- xvi. It is proposed to add 1 full time equivalent Welfare Benefits Officer in the Rents Team (pay band 7) which would provide additional capacity within the Rents Team to prepare for and manage the implications from the raft of changes taking place in the national benefits arrangements. The post would be located in the Rents Account Team and report to the Senior Rents Account Officer. The post would ensure that additional information and assistance was available to tenants in understanding their benefit position and enabling them to meet their commitments such as their regular rent payments.
- xvii. In the Housing Management Team, it is proposed that the present Tenancy and Estates Manager post is deleted, although this has been held vacant for some time. Of the current 6 FTE Housing Management Officer posts, 2 FTE posts are proposed for deletion. The remaining members of this team will require significant training and development, as the team's performance needs to be improved and robust local leadership will be needed to help facilitate this. It is proposed that one of the Community Housing Officers (CHO) posts will be deleted following an impending retirement and the redistribution of some of the post's duties. It is possible that the remaining CHO post, which is proposed to continue, may transfer

in the future to the Waverley Care & Repair Team, as the post complements the duties of that team. One of the administrator posts will be encompassed within the two departmental administrator roles, and the other, which is proposed for deletion, is currently vacant.

- xviii. Across the two teams it is proposed that the post of Legal and Court Officer will be deleted. Officers would deal with more routine cases, and the Council's Legal team would handle more complex cases under an HRA funded service level agreement.

Housing Maintenance

- xix. Under the general management of a Property Services Manager, the maintenance structure, in addition to the area based surveyors, is predicated on three core requirements:-
 1. Robust contract management
 2. Asset management and database maintenance
 3. Property Health & Safety/compliance
- xx. There are unlikely to be any posts at risk in this part of the structure, due to the number of vacancies we have carried in this area, and due to an impending retirement, there is a vacancy, most probably within the Surveyors team. The posts themselves are new, replacing existing ones, in a more streamlined and customer focused structure that is designed to strengthen accountability. The addition of a post specifically for Stock Condition Surveys to be undertaken in-house is new, and aimed at newly-qualified Chartered Surveyors, seeking their first year's practical experience. This work is presently undertaken by agency staff or consultants.
- xxi. It is proposed to delete the Right to Buy Admin Officer post (part-time) but there is likely to be a match and capacity in the new administrator roles in Landlord Services for the post holder.
- xxii. The existing Customer Services Team within the Maintenance section is unaffected by these proposals and there are no proposals at this time to transfer this function to the Council's contractor. The current focus instead is to ensure alignment with corporate standards and systems and to strengthen monitoring and reporting arrangements to drive up customer satisfaction and contract compliance.

Policy & Performance and Tenants Involvement

- xxiii. It is proposed that these two teams would merge to form one Service Development team. The inclusion of a Special Projects Officer will generate capacity, whilst a new Community Development Officer who will be located in Community Services and funded by the HRA, will complement the work of the Tenant Involvement Officer.
- xxiv. Across these two teams, it is proposed that the post of Housing Operations Manager would be deleted.

Housing Development

- xxv. 1 full time equivalent Housing Development Manager (pay band 5) will be created which will form part of a new team that is focused on securing and developing suitable sites for new affordable homes and arises out of the Council's new affordable homes delivery plan. This post would report to the Head of Housing.
- xxvi. The addition of 1 full time equivalent Housing Development Officer (pay band 7) will also form part of a new team that is focused on securing and developing suitable sites for new affordable homes and arises out of the Council's new affordable

4. Job Descriptions

- i. Job descriptions for largely unaffected posts have been reviewed, but not revised at this stage. They will be updated later in the year once the new structure is in place to reflect the changes in reporting lines etc. No proposals are therefore included for the Housing Options Team (which was reviewed 18 months ago), the new Waverley Families Team and the Private Sector Housing Team (which contains just 3 staff).
- ii. Job Descriptions are available for each of the new proposed posts and those existing posts where there are proposed changes. Each Job Description includes an indicative grade reflecting the duties and responsibilities for the post. The grade for each post will be assessed again and finalised at the end of the consultation process taking into account feedback received.

5. Staffing Implications

- i. Many of the changes in structure and roles that are needed will be achieved by deleting vacant posts establishing new posts and making minor changes to existing roles. The staffing structure reflecting the final changes is attached.
- ii. There are 8 posts which are currently vacant which it is proposed are deleted from the establishment, including 2 x Housing Repairs Inspector (posts HF13 and HE05), a Building Services Engineer (post HF11), Surveying and Maintenance Manager (post HF02), Gas Maintenance Administrator (post HF15), Housing Management Officer (post HH05), Housing Manager (post HH01) and Administration Assistant (post HH25).

New Posts

Landlord Services Manager	+1
Property Services Manager	+1
Special Projects Officer	+1
Community Development Officer	+1
Welfare Officer	+1
Housing Development Manager	+1
Housing Development Officer	+1
Stock Condition Surveyor (Trainee)	+1

Building Surveyor		+1
		+9

Posts at Risk

HG01/HO02	Rent Accounts Manager/Senior Rent Accounts Officer	-1
HB98	Operations Manager	-1
HH06	Legal and Court Officer	-1
HH23	Housing Management Officer	-1

Imminent Retirement – posts to be deleted

HH08	Community Housing Officer	-1
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- iii. There is an overall reduction of 4 posts. Every opportunity will be taken to support staff who may be displaced by these proposals to access a suitable alternative role within the Council. For example, arrangements have been established during the consultation process to give Housing staff an opportunity to apply for suitable vacancies across the Council before they are advertised more widely.

[NB. Where there are minor changes to posts, such as job title changes, these are shown on the structure charts but do not affect the establishment and therefore do not require Council approval].

6. Financial implications

The present structure costs £3m per annum. The proposed structure set out originally in the formal consultation was £2.8m, which would have represented a salaries savings to the service of approximately £200k. The revised proposals would still achieve a small saving of £68k in future years while at the same time adding capacity to the Housing Service in a number of areas reflecting, to a large degree, the feedback received. Given the potential cost of redundancies/one-off pension costs of £106,000 should redeployments not prove possible, the payback period is approximately 1.6 years. There would also be some additional costs of contracting with General Fund services such as legal services.

	£,000
Existing HRA Salaries budget (full year)	3,003
Revised Savings from restructuring	-156
2 New Housing Development posts	88
New HRA Salaries budget (full year)	2,935
	<u>-68</u>

7. Equality Impact Assessment

- ii. The Council is committed to meeting the needs of all of its tenants and service users. The proposals contained in this paper are seeking to improve the quality of services by providing a more responsive customer focused service and ensuring that the service is better able to configure it's offer around individual needs. For example, the creation of a Waverley Families Team will enable the Council to develop a multi agency service offer for families with complex needs that is determined by the particular circumstances of each family.
- iii. There will also be an opportunity to improve equalities practice through stronger customer insight and performance management. This will help the service better understand the current and future needs of its tenants and service users including those that are most vulnerable. It will also make it easier for the Council to set targets for improving access and outcomes for key protected and vulnerable groups.
- iv. The equalities implications from this restructure will be assessed at each stage in the process through the development of an Equality Impact Assessment and action will be taken in response to any issues identified. The Equality Impact Assessment has been prepared which should be considered by members in coming to a final decision and a copy is available in the Members' Room and on Memberzone.

8. Environment and Climate Change Implications

- i. The proposals underpin the Council's priority to improve the Council's housing service including the provision of new high quality, energy efficient Council homes, and improving the energy efficiency of the Council's existing housing stock.

9. Timetable

Draft proposals published	21 May
All staff briefing	21 May
Start of formal consultation with staff	21 May
Staff briefings, team meetings, one to ones etc	21 May – 29 June
Consideration by Landlord Special Interest Group	11 June
Open afternoon drop in session for all staff	21 June
Consideration by Overview & Scrutiny	25 June
End of formal consultation with staff	29 June
Consideration by Executive	3 July
Final decision by the Council	17 July

Final proposals published	18 July
All staff briefing	18 July
Implementation of new structure	July and August
Launch of the new service	10 September

[Http://sharepoint/sites/democratic/Council/17 Jul 2012/Housing restructure annexe.docx](http://sharepoint/sites/democratic/Council/17 Jul 2012/Housing restructure annexe.docx)