

Report of Director of Environment and Housing

Report to Housing Advisory Board

Date: 3 June 2014

Subject: Implementation of the Review of Housing Management Services: Update Report

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary of main issues

1. At their meeting on 28th January 2014, the Housing Advisory Board received a detailed update on progress with the implementation of Housing Management Review outcomes, which involved: disbanding the ALMO Boards, creating a Shadow Advisory Board (now superseded by this Housing Advisory Board), and establishing a Programme Board to manage the delivery of the implementation programme. High level structural arrangements for the new service were also outlined, which were being developed on functional lines: Housing Management, Property and Contracts and Strategic Housing. The Board was updated on appointments made to Chief Officer posts and on plans to complete appointments to the other JNC level posts. At its meeting on 8th April 2014, the Board received a further update from the Director of Environment and Housing on senior officer appointments.
2. This report provides the next update on appointments to the new management structure, and sets out plans to complete the restructure of the service. It also outlines some of the work being done to review and redesign the service across the city, adopting common operating standards based on best practice and informed by staff and partners' views.

Recommendations

3. Housing Advisory Board members are invited to note the progress being made to deliver the outcomes of the Review, including the recent appointments to senior

manager posts and service redesign, and agree to receive further updates as the implementation plans progress.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to update Members of the Housing Advisory Board on progress with the delivery of Housing Management Review outcomes.

2 Background information

- 2.1 The Executive Board on 19th June 2013 took a decision to integrate housing management within the Council's Environment and Housing Directorate, and a subsequent report set out the implementation arrangements and governance structures that were to be put in place.
- 2.2 The former ALMO staff were transferred back to the Council on 1 October and the ALMO Boards have been disbanded. A shadow Housing Advisory Board was established to oversee the transition and an officer Programme Board was also set up to manage the detailed service re-design work streams.
- 2.3 A proposal to organise the service on functional lines was presented to the Shadow Housing Advisory Board on 5 September 2013, and it was agreed that further work would be undertaken to develop detailed staffing structures under each of the functional areas: Housing Management, Property and Contracts and Strategic Housing. The three areas would be headed by three Chief Officers, and appointments have been made to these posts, along with the majority of the JNC level posts. Further appointments are now being made to the next tier of posts (PO6), and structure proposals for the whole services are expected to be agreed and delivered by end July 2014.
- 2.4 In parallel to the filling of senior posts, work has been done to start to redesign each function area based on pooled knowledge and identified best practice from across the service, and also look at other ways in which work done historically within ALMOs might be integrated into other functional areas across the directorate and the Council.
- 2.5 A new Housing Advisory Board has formally been established and the shadow Board has been stood down. The new Board is receiving regular updates on progress with implementing the Housing Management Review outcomes.
- 2.6 At the Housing Advisory Board meeting on 28 January 2014, Members received a detailed update showing the actions taken since the decision was taken to bring ALMOs into the Council and plans to deliver a new Housing Management service for Leeds. A further update was provided on 8th April 2014, detailing appointments to senior officer posts.

3 Main issues

- 3.1 This report provides the next update to Board members on the actions taken to date to implement the outcomes of the Housing Management Review, including an update on recent appointments and steps being taken to redesign services to bring in consistent best practice across the city.

3.2 Structural Change

- 3.2.1 As outlined in paragraph 2.3 above, appointments were made to the three Chief Officer posts (two permanent appointments, and one interim appointment). The Chief Officers have since appointed to their senior office JNC level posts, and are currently appointing to PO6 level posts (the position in each functional area is given in paragraphs 3.23, - 3.25 below and this is summarised in the appendix to this report). This will provide the necessary senior management capacity to develop and deliver structural arrangements across the service.
- 3.2.2 An agreed consultation process was agreed with the trades unions, involving fortnightly meetings to develop, consult on and implement the new arrangements.
- 3.2.3 **Housing Management:** Liz Cook, as Chief Officer has recruited to Senior Management posts at JNC level, and the majority of PO6 managers, with one vacancy which is out for internal advertisement. The Housing Management structure proposal has been designed to align with the Council's Area Committee arrangements and support the integration of Housing Management Services into the Council. This allows the service to contribute fully to the value of 'working as a team for Leeds' and act as a key link for tenants into the full range of Council services. The remaining structural proposals are due to be shared with trades unions on 23 May 2014, and work is ongoing to develop generic job descriptions for posts at PO4 level and below.
- 3.2.4 **Property and Contracts:** Steve Hunt, as the interim Chief Officer, has recruited to his senior management team and to some PO6 posts, with three vacancies currently out for internal advertisement. The remaining draft structure is now with trades unions for comment, and work is ongoing to create new job descriptions for posts at PO4 level and below.
- 3.2.5 **Strategic Housing:** Simon Costigan, as Chief Officer, is now leading service teams covering Housing Support (including the Homelessness service, Gypsy Traveller service, Adaptations, Housing Policy), Housing Partnerships (including private sector housing, licensing and enforcement, and work with a range of housing partnerships), Beeston Hill and Little London and Beeston PFI and the Sustainable Energy and Climate Change Team. In addition, staff from the former ABCL Performance and Research team have been brought into the Strategic Housing Division, and has integrated them into wider Environment and Housing Performance and Service Review team. A new PO6 post has been established to lead the integrated team and an appointment has been made to this post. A new Information Management and Technology team is also currently in development which will service the new Housing Leeds service as well as other parts of Environment and Housing.
- 3.2.6 It is expected that structural arrangements for all three service areas will be agreed and implemented by end July 2014, after which it will be possible to determine the actual costs involved and the levels of savings accruing from these changes (an actual position will be provided with the next update).
- 3.2.7 A cultural change programme is also being developed to support the changes required, which includes moving away from specialist roles to a more flexible,

generic workforce which is customer focused and developed to recognise the needs of the tenant.

3.3 Service Redesign

- 3.3.8 Work to review and redesign services to deliver a consistent service across the city based on best practice has commenced, and is being informed by the views of staff and partners.
- 3.3.9 A particular focus has been on access arrangements and how these are being unified as part of the development of the new service. This includes simplifying existing telephone numbers, standardising housing office opening times and commencing communication work to inform tenants of the new simplified arrangements and what this means for them e.g. through special mailings, updated web content and social media announcements, a special feature in the next scheduled tenants newsletter, and through cascade through other staff and partners communication mechanisms.
- 3.3.10 **Housing Office Opening Hours:** the opening hours for the 11 stand-alone housing offices have been reviewed and a more consistent set of opening times came into effect at the end of April. The majority of offices will work 8.30 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, and 8.30 a.m. and 3.30 p.m. on Wednesdays to allow one hour a week for staff training and development. Offices in Richmond Hill and Burmantofts will operate to slightly different hours to take account of local needs and developments. This standardises, and in five cases extends the opening hours in 10 of the 11 offices, and housing teams will continue to hold various drop-in surgeries in key buildings/locations to support tenants' access to services.
- 3.3.11 Tenants are also able to access services face to face across any of the 16 One Stop Centres, and Housing Leeds is actively engaged in the Citizens@Leeds programme which involves the creation of community hubs. This aims to bring together staff from a range of local services, provided by the Council and partners, to tackle poverty and deprivation (three hubs are being developed in Harehills, Armley and Middleton). During the remainder of the year, further opportunities will be explored to place local housing teams within the communities they serve, and this could include relocating teams into One Stop Centres in some cases.
- 3.3.12 **Telephone Access:** steps have been taken to adopt one single number for Housing Leeds enquiries (0800 188 4000) which will be supplemented by a new 0133 local rate number as a cheaper (or free, depending on any free minutes package) alternative for mobile phone users. This helps to promote a single consistent service for all tenants across the city. There is no additional cost in adopting the new numbers and announcements are made on the existing numbers and calls are automatically transferred. All tenants are informed on all correspondence of the textphone for deaf and hard of hearing people (0113 222 4410).

- 3.3.13 **On-line digital access:** Housing Leeds services have an integrated web presence on the Council's website, and on a more informal basis by a distinct Housing Leeds presence on Facebook and Twitter.
- 3.3.14 A number of projects and initiatives have been undertaken to support tenants to get on line, whether in the community or through training and development opportunities. In the year ahead, Housing Leeds will be working with the Transactional Web Service project, which is working to give customers of the Council an online portal through which they can access their service requests e.g. potholes, missed bins, faulty streetlight etc.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

- 4.1.15 Staff have been fully engaged in the development of the Housing Management Review through regular communications, staff briefings and key messages that have been issued through a range of media.
- 4.1.16 A Joint Consultative Committee has been established with the Trades Unions that will deal solely with matters connected with the implementation of the Housing Management Review.
- 4.1.17** Arrangements are being made to ensure that tenants are made aware of any changes to customer access arrangements through a range of mechanisms (see paragraph 3.39 above).

4.1.18 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

- 4.1.1 This is not a decision-making report and as such there is no need for an EIA screening document to be completed.
- 4.1.2 Customer Access developments have been made in response to public and member feedback and will increase access for tenants.

4.2 Council policies and City Priorities

- 4.2.1 The changes are being delivered in line with the Council's policies and procedures and are designed to deliver an improved and more cost effective Housing service across the city. Delivery of the Review is a specific priority within the Best Council Business Plan.

4.3 Resources and value for money

- 4.3.1 One of the outcomes of the return to the Council of the Housing service is the reduction in duplication of roles. Future service design and structural arrangements will maximise opportunities to take out duplications and streamline/optimize service delivery, allowing funds saved to be used to deliver an improved service for council tenants.

4.4 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

- 4.4.1 Legal Services have been fully involved in the process for the closure of ALMO companies and the transfer of resources into the Council.
- 4.4.2 There is no exempt or confidential information within the report.
- 4.4.3 The original Executive Board decision was subject to call in.

4.5 Risk Management

- 4.5.1 A Programme Board chaired by the Director of Environment and Housing is in place and programme activity is being delivered via a number of work streams. Governance arrangements exist to deliver the changes and manage any associated risks. Regular reports will be taken to Housing Advisory Board which is chaired by the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods, Planning and Support Services.

5 Conclusions

- 5.1 This report updates the Housing Advisory Board on actions being taken to implement the Housing Review outcomes, including the development and implementation of structure proposals, as well as steps being taken to redesign services, introducing more consistency and adopting best practice across the city.

6 Recommendations

- 6.1 Housing Advisory Board members are invited to note the progress being made to deliver the outcomes of the Housing Management Review, including the recent appointments to senior manager posts and service redesign, and agree to receive further updates as the implementation plans progress.

7 Background documents¹

- 7.1 None

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.