

**Report of:** Environmental Health Manager

**Report to:** Director of Environment and Housing

**Date:** 29th October 2014

**Subject:** Restructure of the Environmental Health Service

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 type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" 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. The Environmental Health Service was last restructured in January 2013. Since then the need to make further financial savings has continued. This report sets out proposals to reduce the number of operational teams in the service from three to two and to allow a number of staff to depart under the Early Leavers Initiative (ELI).
2. One PO4 Team Manager post will be deleted.

### Recommendations

3. The Director of Environment and Housing is recommended to approve the changes to the structure of the Environmental Health Service as set out in this report.
4. The Director of Environment and Housing is recommended to approve the approach to recruitment to the two posts of Team Manager (PO4) as set out in this report.
5. The Director of Environment and Housing is requested to note the reduction in capacity brought about by the proposed changes and to agree to the backfilling of a number of vacant posts to mitigate the risks to the service due to the loss of expertise and knowledge.

## **1 Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 This report seeks the Director's approval to make changes to the structure of the Environmental Health Service.
- 1.2 The changes are driven by the continuing need to make financial savings across the Council and also to seek any consequent reductions in staffing by voluntary means wherever possible.
- 1.3 The intended timetable for the proposed changes would see savings accrued from the beginning of the 2015/16 financial year.

## **2 Background information**

2.1 The Environmental Health service provides a range of important public health and environmental protection services. Whilst many of these services are 'behind the scenes' they protect people from issues such as food poisoning and infectious diseases; workplace hazards and accidents and environmental issues such as air pollution and noise. The current service structure was implemented in January 2013 and is based on three main operational teams:-

- Food and Health
- Environmental Protection
- Health, Safety and Animal Welfare

2.2 Following the re-structure in 2013 a lot of work has been done across the service and also in conjunction with other West Yorkshire Environmental Health colleagues to improve knowledge sharing and improve the use of resources by streamlining and simplifying many areas of work. The key focus has been on the highest risk areas and to maximise resilience and capacity to deal with major issues such as food poisoning outbreaks or larger scale pollution or public health incidents.

2.3 Closer working with the other West Yorkshire Environmental Health services follows from the consideration of a possible West Yorkshire based shared service model a few years ago. Whilst the various Council Leaders were not in favour of proceeding down the road of a shared service they have given a clear message about the need to collaborate across the region to ensure important services are protected.

## **3 Proposed Changes**

3.1 Three changes to the current structure are proposed:-

- Reduction in the number of operational teams from three to two. This will see the displacement of one PO4 Team Manager.
- The release of five Senior EHOs via the ELI scheme and the deletion of the posts from the structure.

- The backfilling of three posts at SO2 to mitigate the loss of expertise and knowledge caused by the departure of five Senior EHOs.

### **3.2 Reduction in number of Operational Teams from three to two**

- 3.2.1 As the service reduces in overall size it is logical to challenge the number of teams/senior managers needed. If this is not done all the savings will be made at operational levels and be open to criticism by staff and Trade Unions alike who generally prefer to see senior management positions cut. Whilst the reduction in manager positions will bring some additional pressure this is believed to be manageable and in many ways an inevitable consequence of the current financial climate. In reality, some additional pressure will be brought to all parts of the service, again, an inevitable consequence of services getting smaller.
- 3.2.2 The decision on how to configure the two teams – both in terms of team functions and team members – will be determined by managers following a dialogue with staff in the service. Environmental Health consists of a series of related functions that can be configured in a number of different ways and it is sensible to allow staff to have an input into that process.
- 3.2.3 The staffing configuration will also need to take account of the staff that it is proposed to leave via the ELI scheme and their areas of current expertise and knowledge. Prior to departure, knowledge transfer and sharing will be a priority right across the service to ensure maximum resilience is maintained.

### **3.3 Release of five senior EHOs via the ELI Scheme**

- 3.3.1 The decision to release five senior and experienced officers carries some risk in terms of loss of knowledge and experience. However over the last few years the service has been working hard to become more resilient by working across traditional team boundaries and also by challenging established ways of working and service delivery.
- 3.3.2 Much work has also been done in conjunction with the other four West Yorkshire Environmental Health Services. All authorities have seen the benefit of more focussed and better organised working and this will clearly continue going forward due to the shared problem of resource pressures.
- 3.3.3 The decisions contained within this report will allow certainty to be obtained as early as possible in terms of staff departures and maximise the time available to transfer as much knowledge and skills as is possible.

### **3.4 Backfilling of Vacant/Seconded Posts**

- 3.4.1 Currently the service has two Senior Technical Officer/EHO posts (SO2) vacant due to temporary secondments to Housing Services. These posts have been vacant for several months and whilst this has caused some service delivery pressure it has also helped to deliver a positive budget forecast for the service for the current year. A further post of Senior Scientific Officer (PO2) has been vacant for over 12 months and the savings accrued have, again, contributed to a positive budget position.

- 3.4.2 Whilst the service has managed with these three vacant positions it is felt that to add a further five vacant posts will be damaging to both staff morale and service delivery capacity. It is recommended therefore that these three positions be refilled as part of the overall proposals set out in this report.
- 3.4.3 Following a review of the impact of the vacancy of the Senior Scientific Officer position it is recommended that the post be re-designated as a Senior Technical Officer/EHO at SO2 grade.
- 3.4.4 The backfilling of the three currently vacant positions also provides the potential for staff to move from elsewhere in the Council which may help with service changes and budget pressures elsewhere.

#### **4 Financial Implications**

- 4.1 It has been assumed that the five positions released via the ELI scheme will become vacant from 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015. It has also been assumed that the three posts to be backfilled will be filled on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015.
- 4.2 On that basis the full year savings effect of the proposed changes is 241k. This equates to 10.27% of the net service budget.

#### **5 Human Resources/Workforce Implications**

- 5.1 The General Purposes Committee agreed changes to all Council employees' terms and conditions at its meeting in July. The changes are currently proposed to come in to effect from the 7<sup>th</sup> November. This situation may change however if a Collective Agreement is reached via ongoing negotiations with the Trade Unions. The workforce implementation plan for this re-structure will reflect any such changes should a Collective Agreement be reached.
- 5.2 The three Team Managers (PO4) are deemed at risk following the commencement of this process and have been separately briefed. They have been made aware of the available support arrangements including accessing the 'Talent Pool' at priority three and support around interview techniques etc. It is proposed that the three Team Managers are given a ring-fenced opportunity to apply for the two Team Manager positions proposed and selection will be via a shortened application form and interview process.
- 5.3 The displaced Team Manager will be supported via arrangements applicable at the time this restructure is approved by the Director.
- 5.4 No changes to job descriptions are proposed due to the flexible wording and generic nature of the work of the posts concerned.
- 5.5 The current Senior Scientific Officer post (PO2) is recommended for deletion and replacement with a Senior Technical Officer/EHO (SO2) position on the current job description.
- 5.6 All other staff job descriptions will remain unchanged.

5.7 The backfilling of the three posts at SO2 provides the opportunity for staff to move from other services within the Council and so help with any service reductions that may be being planned.

## **6 Corporate Considerations**

### **6.1 Consultation and Engagement**

6.1.1 The Executive Board Member for Cleaner, Stronger & Safer Communities has been briefed on this proposal and is supportive of the changes proposed.

6.1.2 Trade Union stewards were briefed on the proposals set out in this report on 24<sup>th</sup> September. A further meeting was then held on 23<sup>rd</sup> October to discuss any comments or concerns. The Trade Unions sought clarity on the backfilling of the three vacant posts and also requested that the vacant Senior Scientific Officer post be re-designated as a Senior EHO post at PO2 grade rather than an EHO/Senior Technical Officer role at SO2. This latter point has been considered but it is not recommended to the Director as part of these changes.

6.1.3 Staff within the service have had the opportunity to attend one of three briefing sessions and have been asked to submit their views on the name and service responsibilities of the two teams proposed. This dialogue will continue beyond the sign off of the Delegated Decision Report to allow the two newly appointed Team Managers to contribute to that debate following their anticipated appointment in early November.

6.1.4 Colleagues in Finance and Human Resources have been consulted and have assisted with the relevant sections of this report.

### **6.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration**

6.2.1 An Equality Screening Document has been completed for this proposal and the conclusion is that there is no impact for Equality, Diversity or Integration.

### **6.3 Council Policies and City Priorities**

6.3.1 The proposals set out in this report will help the Council to meet its ongoing budget challenges. At the same time it is believed that the service will retain sufficient resilience and capacity to fulfil its statutory responsibilities around protecting the public and the local environment.

### **6.4 Resources and Value for Money**

6.4.1 Financial implications have been set out in section 4 of this report above.

### **6.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In**

6.5.1 The decision to amend the structure as recommended in this report is an Administrative Decision that can be made by the Director under the Scheme of Delegation; the decision is not eligible for call-in.

## **6.6 Risk Management**

- 6.6.1 The main risk with reducing the overall size of the service is around the degree of resilience and levels of expertise that are retained to deal with major issues and ongoing workloads. It is believed that these risks are mitigated by the ongoing work to make current service delivery arrangements more efficient and also by the proposal to backfill a number of posts.

## **7 Conclusions**

- 7.1 The Council is facing extremely challenging financial times and the need to make revenue savings shows no sign of lessening over the next few years. The proposals recommended in this report will contribute to the savings required by the Directorate and the Council and whilst they do increase risks in terms of service capacity and resilience it is believed that these risks are significantly mitigated by the proposals to backfill a number of posts and the ongoing work to share expertise, knowledge and resources both within the Council and also across West Yorkshire..

## **8 Recommendations**

- 8.1 The Director of Environment and Housing is recommended to approve the changes to the structure of the Environmental Health Service as set out in this report.
- 8.2 The Director of Environment and Housing is recommended to approve the approach to recruitment to the two posts of Team Manager (PO4) as set out in this report.
- 8.3 The Director of Environment and Housing is requested to note the reduction in capacity brought about by the proposed changes and to agree to the backfilling of a number of vacant posts to mitigate the risks to the service due to the loss of expertise and knowledge.

## **9 Background documents<sup>1</sup>**

- 9.1 Equality Impact screening document.

---

<sup>1</sup> 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.