



Report of Head of Strategy and Investment, Property and Contracts, Housing Leeds

Report to Director of Environments and Housing and to the Director of Resources

Date: Feb 2015

Subject: Housing Leeds / Corporate Fire Safety Structure

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

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1.** This Report details a proposed inter-related amendment to both the current E&H Housing Leeds Property and Contracts and Resources Health and Safety Structures in order to rationalise service delivery in relation to Fire Safety. The proposed amendment will deliver savings for the general fund and rationalise senior management through using joint resources. It will also deliver a 2 year project specifically to tackle the high proportion of dwelling fires in the city in conjunction with West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1.** The Director of Environment and Housing and the Director of Resources are asked to approve the structure as detailed in this report relevant to their particular portfolio's.

3. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 3.1. To obtain approval to implement changes to departmental staffing structures.

4. ISSUE 1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 4.1. The corporate Health & Safety Team are based within Resources and are organised to provide guidance and support on a number of high risk operational areas. Fire Safety is one of those areas and the team currently has a Corporate Fire Safety Manager working solely on fire safety and then a number of wider team members who carry out fire safety activities as a part of their role.
- 4.2. As part of it's landlord function related to the high number of residential assets and volume of contracting activity Housing Leeds also has a Compliance Team which is arranged to both monitor and operationally manage a number of high risk functions for the housing stock. Fire safety is one of the functions and there are 4 posts on the Housing Leeds structure working solely on fire safety, one of which is currently vacant.
- 4.3. There is some limited duplication of responsibilities between the two teams as operational and responsibility lines are clearly drawn but in the main the roles of the teams have a different focus.
- 4.4. The current Fire Safety Manager, in Resources, is leaving the authority on 31st March 2015 under the Early Leavers Initiative and therefore the opportunity has been taken to consider how the two teams might work more closely together and share resources. The two current structures will require slight amendment to ensure the management supervision is of the sufficient seniority to support the scale and complexity of the issues faced across the Authority.
- 4.5. For some years Housing Leeds has had a partnership with West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue working in the East of the City to tackle fire safety in Council properties. Housing Leeds fund a post based in WYFRS and due to the success of the project they would like to role it out across the City with three posts one of which they will fund.

5. MAIN ISSUES

- 5.1 The Corporate H&S Manager has confirmed the minimum resources that are essential to support the corporate Council asset is 0.5FTE of a post at PO4 level provided the existing SO2 staff within Corporate H&S remain in place to carry out front line duties. The Housing Leeds structure currently has a PO4 Compliance Manager position however as things stand the service does not have the capacity to dedicate 0.5 of its FTE resource towards this corporate agenda.
- 5.2 Housing Leeds currently has a vacant post of an SO1 Fire Safety Officer. Discussions with the corporate Health and Safety Manager have identified that there is potential for this post to be deleted and a new position of Fire Safety Manager at PO4 introduced which would work half on the Corporate agenda and half on the Housing Leeds agenda. The post would be jointly funded by the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account releasing savings for both accounts. This would provide the level of senior support required by the Corporate H&S team and with some slight amendments to duties within the fire safety team have minimal impact on Housing Leeds. Appendix A shows this in diagrammatical format.

The annual financial impact can be seen below

Posts Deleted	Scale point	Cost	Fund
Corporate Fire Safety Manager	44	-£46,725	General Fund
Fire Safety Officer	31	-£32,744	HRA
New Post			
Fire Safety Manager	44	+£23,362	General Fund
		+£23,362	HRA
Savings		+£23,362	General Fund
		+£9,382	HRA

5.3 It is proposed that the PO4 post would sit within the Housing Leeds, Property and Contracts structure but would operate between the two departments as required. The proposed post would report to the Housing Leeds Technical Services Manager but through a matrix management regime report on Corporate issues to the HR Manager (H&S). Therefore joint performance appraisals may be appropriate in this instance. The post would be filled through internal recruitment.

6. FIRE RISK REDUCTION OFFICERS

6.1 Over the last five years the Leeds District has experienced the highest proportion of accidental dwelling fire deaths in West Yorkshire. This is of great concern to both West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service (WYFRS) and LCC due to the devastating impact these incidents have on the individual and the wider community.

6.2 Under the former ALMO regime East North East Homes formed a partnership with WYFS to trial a working method to mitigate this risk in the Councils housing stock. ENEHL employed an operative sitting within their Construction Services Division who was jointly directed by themselves and the WYFS. WYFS provided training for the operative, uniforms, I.T. & communications. This partnership arrangement has proved to be a great success and helped WYFS and LCC work collaboratively to form closer links whilst delivering a vital service to the community.

6.3 The specific duties carried out were;

- Carry out home visits and assessments pass any relevant information to WYFS
- Install fire detection and provide other fire prevention equipment such as arson prevention letterboxes, fire resistant blankets and vibrating pillows.
- Liaise with Sheltered housing staff and make them aware of issues with customers in their care
- Carryout or report general housekeeping issues around communal buildings and areas
- Provide fire training and advice to other members of staff.
- Provide and distribute fire safety information and leaflets

6.4 A review of the project has been undertaken by management teams of both Property and Contracts and WYFS and there is a strong desire from both parties to continue this exercise, on an increased citywide scale for a further two year period. To do so would require three Fire Risk Reduction Officers and WYFS have advised that they will be able to fund the cost of one as they have a key strategic priority to deliver a proactive fire prevention programme.

6.5 As part of the continued project Property and Contracts Fire Safety Team will also support the reduction of accidental dwelling fire deaths by;

- Sharing information and signposting vulnerable customers to WYFS. Most domestic house fires are attributed to the following, Mental Health issues, substance abuse, impairment or living alone.
- Help reduce the number of arson incidents attributed to anti-social behavior
- Contribute to safer Leeds priorities and the perception of people feeling safer in their homes.
- Work in partnership with WYFS and share resource
- Work in partnership with other agencies such as Leeds Adult Social Care and Leeds and Yorkshire Partnership Mental Health Trust to share resource & information.

6.6 These partnerships give WYFS a better chance of identifying and being able to provide earlier intervention with vulnerable customers who pose a higher risk.

6.7 The proposed posts will be directed by the Fire Safety Team management but for logistical reasons will sit within Construction Services as:-

- Practical experience is required as part of their duties as these include carrying out minor repairs and installation of fire detection equipment.
- Access to a stores facility to book out fire detection equipment and sundries..
- Good knowledge of the repairs system and the ability to raise repairs to the appropriate trade following the inspection.

6.8 A two year timescale is believed to be appropriate for the project as that will allow sufficient time to visit all high risk properties. The posts would be filled through internal recruitment.

7. CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

7.1. Union colleagues have been consulted and there have been no comments.

8. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY / COHESION AND INTEGRATION

8.1. Due to its small scale this structural changes does not merit an equality impact assessment, an EIA has been undertaken for the original P&C restructure.

9. RESOURCES AND VALUE FOR MONEY

Management Post

9.1. This report offers cost savings to the authority and a more effective use of its resources across departmental boundaries, as noted in para 5 this would realize a recurring annual saving of;

General Fund	£23,362
HRA	£9,382

Fire Risk Reduction Officers

9.2. This is growth over two years. It is proposed the posts involved be graded at C3 and that they would require a van and sundry materials throughout the year equating to £47,163 per post. (C3 - £29,663, transport costs £8500, equipment and materials £9000)

Whilst three FTE's are proposed WYFS will fund one FTE with on costs and equipment, resulting in a net cost to the Council of £94,326 (£47,163 x2)

These posts are funded from the Housing Revenue Account and specifically from the 3% budget provision increase identified for 2015/16 and the HRA saving item identified in 9.1 above.

9.3. Collectively the impact of all the recommendations in this report are

General Fund a saving of £23,362.
HRA Costs of £84,944 for a two year period.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS, ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND CALL IN

10.1. The decision being requested in this Report is a Significant Operational Decision and as such is not eligible for call in. Powers of delegation to the Director for this decision are contained within the scheme under Part 3 of the Constitution.

There are no significant legal implications associated with this decision. The report contains no information which is considered confidential or exempt as determined by the Access to information Procedure Rules within part 4 of the Constitution.

11. RISK MANAGEMENT

11.1. The Council is under well documented financial pressure to reduce its operating costs and this report offers an opportunity to support that whilst still managing its H&S duties. The risk elements should this report not be agreed would either be:

Failure to allow an ELI case and thus realize cost savings to assist corporate reduction targets, or

To allow the ELI saving to be realized but failure to put into place the 0.5 FTE resource required to steer the authorities fire safety agenda thus increasing the risk of fire, costs of fire and risk of prosecution.

11.2. The city has a high proportion of accidental dwelling fire deaths and the partnership run under the former East North East ALMO has shown great benefits to the WYFS, residents of Leeds and to the City Council.

12. CONCLUSIONS

12.1. The proposed structure in Issue 1 is a viable option to achieving savings to support the Councils overall cost reduction targets whilst also meeting its H&S obligations.

Portfolio	Post	FTE	Action
Resources	PO4 Corporate Fire Safety Manager	1	Delete Staff member taking ELI
Environments and Housing	PO4 Fire Safety Manager	1	Establish
Environments and Housing	SO1 Fire Safety Officer	1	Delete
Environments and Housing	C3 Fire Risk Reduction Officers	3	Establish on 2 year fixed term

12.2. The Fire Risk Reduction partnership is a short term continuation of a commitment made under the former ALMO era which has make a significant contribution to fire safety in the city.

13. RECOMMENDATIONS

13.1 The Directors of Environment and Housing and of Resources are asked to approve the proposed changes to the existing structures within the teams identified.

