



Report to: Cabinet Meeting - 12 July 2022

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Tim Wendels, Homes & Health

Director Lead: Suzanne Shead, Director Housing, Health & Wellbeing

Lead Officer: Caroline Wagstaff, Business Manager – Housing Maintenance & Asset Management, Ext. 5637

Report Summary	
Type of Report	Open Report with Exempt Appendices Non-Key Decision
Report Title	Housing Maintenance & Asset Management Restructure
Purpose of Report	To seek approval for a restructure within Housing Maintenance & Asset Management Business Unit
Recommendations	<p>To approve the deletion of x6 posts and, in principle, agreement for the x 7 new posts and the revised grading of the Stores Supervisor.</p> <p>The approval is subject to Job Descriptions/Job Evaluations agreed and within cost parameters of 5%.</p> <p>That the above proposals are considered and feedback provided prior to consultation with the recognised Trades Unions and affected employees.</p>

1.0 Background

1.1 There are essentially five issues driving this proposal which are:

1. Challenges around recruitment to managerial posts in the current market place and the ability to compete with market salaries offered
2. A gap in succession planning in the current structure for key officer and manager positions now and in the future (i.e. the need to 'grow our own')
3. The need to resource and manage bidding for and managing carbon neutral/fuel poverty initiatives to take maximum advantage of government grant funding.
4. To address the increase in workload from additional safety works responsibilities identified from the current work plan, Decent Homes Two and in preparation of changes from the Building Safety and Fire Safety Bills 2021 currently being enacted.

5. To improve the customer experience by increasing efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery; including a better match of trades to the repairs requests from tenants.
- 1.2 There is a shortage of talented and experienced candidates in the asset management field across the sector at present. This shortage is likely to continue and only get worse in the years to come as demand for these skills grows from an increased priority of safety and decency of our homes. The scarcity is now driving up wages beyond the Council's reach in many areas.
- 1.3 In 2020 we went out to the market for recruitment of a new Investment Manager. The job role was re-evaluated before being advertised and was increased by one grade. However, despite wide advertisement, sharing the advert widely on LinkedIn and working with recruitment agencies, no applications were received. Feedback from the agencies noted that it was a very difficult time to recruit as there were few applicants and the salary was significantly below the market rates attracting candidates at that time.
- 1.4 Similarly, a vacancy for a Gas Surveyor was advertised in December 2021 and January 2022 and secured no interested candidates. We have struggled to attract and keep temporary surveyors on higher salaries which could be due to the significant administration in this role which may not be attractive to surveyors. This has led to a review of this role as part of the proposal.
- 1.5 There are too many significant gaps in the skills and experience required for a manager to enable an officer to step up into roles, for example, when analysing the difference between a surveyor and asset manager job description there is:
- An absence of staff management experience
 - No leadership role to gain experience and skills in leading teams or large scale projects
 - No experience/responsibility for developing policies and procedures
 - Limited opportunities to assist in the development of key strategies
 - Limited performance management requirements
 - Limited report writing experience
- 1.6 By adopting the proposals, this would allow for a staffing model that allows for succession planning and the ability to 'grow our own' for managerial posts which will offer many advantages:
- Identifying people in-house with the right skills and aptitude to be developed
 - Cutting the cost of recruitment
 - Enable better preparation for replacement
 - Retention and promotion of in-house talent
 - Likely to improve gender diversity in roles
 - Creates a structure for training and development

- 1.7 The government commitment towards decarbonisation is increasing pressure on landlords to bid for grants to kick-start decarbonising housing stock by 2050 whilst also tackling fuel poverty. In 2019, the Carbon Trust calculated the Council need to spend £81m on decarbonising the rented housing stock; that equates to over £2.9m spend per annum from now until 2050 if the Council were to commence a programme immediately – and this based on limited data. To provide some context, the total current investment programme per annum is £5.5million. In add into this the detailed information needed and complex bidding processes and this is a significant amount of work well beyond the current resources we have. A key start however would be to appoint an Investment & Decarbonisation Manager (replacing the Investment Manager post), with the potential to lead in this area and planning for future investment and funding bids and a Senior Investment Surveyor to manage the programmes from assessment, design through to sign-off of works.
- 1.8 As part of the Social Housing Charter, the housing sector is expecting a revised Decent Homes standard that is likely to incorporate elements of thermal efficiency as well as crossing all tenures. The impact of this in terms of resources and costs is currently unknown, however the Government expects landlords to focus on their existing stock decency – not just new build energy efficient homes and would also sit with this team to design and deliver a programme
- 1.9 With the introduction of both the Building & Fire Safety Acts due shortly, this provides some of the biggest changes for social housing and includes tough new criminal sanctions such as unlimited fines and considerable jail terms for non-compliance. The importance of a robust compliance regime cannot be understated and in a recent report to SLT, estimating that at least another £2.4m programme of works in addition to the usual investments will be required over the next 5/6 years.
- 1.10 The Council are currently implementing new ICT software for asset management to better manage and inform investment planning going forward. The Council need to build capacity in the team to fully analyse data and prepare detailed costed investment plans and reports for future investment programmes and to inform the HRA 30 year business plan.
- 1.11 In addition, the procurement of a new housing management system is underway which is the bedrock of the Council's repairs service. There will be a significant demand for the Business Unit to assist in the procurement, development and implementation of the system and the Works Planner Supervisor could be spending up to 50% of their time on the project. A Repairs Manager as proposed will help plug the gaps and ensure continued support for the Repairs Service Customer Advisors during this period.
- 1.12 The role of the Stores Supervisor has adapted in the changing times post Covid and post Brexit. This role has taken the lead in supplying equipment not just for Housing, but assisting other departments in the Council as well. This role has also taken on the training and management of an Apprentice and the intention is to take on another Apprentice when a vacancy arises. The complexities and responsibility for this work are not appropriately reflected in the job description. Therefore, work is ongoing to revise job description.

- 1.13 In reviewing the roles and services provided by the Stores; it has become clear that more than two posts long term is not a viable option. Currently this need is met through an apprentice, but this is only a short term solution and a more permanent solution is sought.
- 1.14 The ability to have a third post of Stores and Purchasing Technician (as opposed to an apprentice) will also facilitate service improvement in the repairs team. The proposal will enable parts not held in impressed stock on vans; but available in store; to be delivered onsite. The business case in more detail can be seen in **Appendix 3**.
- 1.15 The apprentice role will be kept should a vacancy in stores arise in the future. There is then to be a clear career path into the full post of Stores and Purchasing Technician.
- 1.16 After a review of works orders issued last year, there has been a significant increase in work in plumbing and joiner work. The trades team has 2 x Multi-skilled vacant posts which it has been difficult to recruit to so this presented a good opportunity to revise the posts and better align trades to demand.

2.0 Proposal/Options Considered and Reasons for Recommendation

- 2.1 The health and safety, repair and investment in Council housing is a key priority of the Council and the proposal set out below will support the Council's community plan objective to create more and better quality homes through our roles as landlord, developer and planning authority.
- 2.2 It is proposed that:
- (a) The Investment Manager has a revised job description to include responsibilities and competencies required to lead on decarbonisation investment for the Council's housing stock and:
 - (b) The Gas Surveyor role to be changed to a Gas Co-ordinator, with the technical expertise element and boiler assessments covered by our current Gas Auditors for an additional fee. Currently our Gas Auditors carry out a random 10% gas system audit after servicing or repair. This would be extended for a fee; covered from salary savings (between Gas surveyor and Gas Co-ordinator) to include renewal inspections where required and further ad-hoc assessments for complex cases.
 - (c) It is also proposed for the 2 x multi-skilled posts to be changed to 1 x Joiner and 1 x Plumber for a better fit for the repairs work coming through. This will lead to a small increase in the salary budget as both these posts attract the market supplement.
- 2.3 Furthermore, it is proposed to provide additional staffing in the form of 1 x Senior Investment Surveyor and 1 x Repairs & Voids Manager to cover the increasing service delivery demand and investment in stock; escalating work on decarbonisation; building safety; whilst at the same time allowing for more resilience and succession planning in business-critical roles.

- 2.4 The role of the Repairs and Voids Manager is also intended to pick up significant amount of the day to day, operational responsibility of the Assistant Business Manager so that they in turn can work with the Business Manager on strategic planning and improvement of the overall service.
- 2.5 The cost of these roles is partially offset by deleting the post of Void Foreman which is no longer required as the voids management is now split across the 4 x Repairs & Void Supervisors instead of just one, on a geographical basis with one Supervisor taking the lead for the empty homes function
- 2.6 Currently the Stores team has 1 x Supervisor, 1 x Stores and Purchasing Technician and 1 x Apprentice. The current apprentice role completed their apprenticeship recently and has been recruited to a temporary Stores and Purchasing post pending a decision on the permanent introduction of a second Stores and Purchasing Technician. The business case for this can be found in **Appendix 3**
- 2.7 The current structure for the Business Unit can be found in **Appendix 1** and the proposed structure in **Appendix 2** attached.
- 2.8 The table below outlines the changes to posts in the business unit.

Deleted Posts (6 FTE)			
Post	Scale	FTE	Comments
Investment Manager	NS13	1	Currently vacant
Voids Foreman	NS8	1	Currently vacant
Stores and Purchasing Apprentice (currently on 6 month contract as Technician)	Apprentice Grade	1	Created Stores Technician would be advertised internally.
Compliance Surveyor (Gas Safety & Water Hygiene)	NS11	1	Currently Vacant
Multi-skilled Tradesman	Spot Salary	2	Post to be deleted to fund specific skilled posts
Created Posts (7 FTE)			
Investment & Decarbonisation Manager	NS15	1	Post will be advertised internally and externally at the same time
Senior Investment Surveyor	NS11	1	Post will be advertised internally and externally at the same time
Repairs & Voids Manager	NS13*	1	*Scale estimated – subject to JE Post will be advertised internally and externally at the same time
Stores and Purchasing Technician	NS6	1	To be advertised internally only in the first instance
Gas Coordinator	NS9*	1	*Scale estimated – subject to JE. Savings from post will be used to fund additional heating surveys as required by external contractor.

Joiner	Craft	1	Including Market Supplement
Plumber	Craft	1	Including Market Supplement
Amended Posts (1 FTE)			
Stores Supervisor	NS8 to NS9*	1	*Scale estimated – subject to JE

These recommendations will ensure the service is sufficiently resourced; create a staff succession framework and prepare for future work on building safety, decent homes two and the decarbonisation of Council homes which aligns to Community Plan objective to create more and better quality homes through our roles as landlord, developer and planning authority.

3.0 Implications

3.1 Financial Implications (Fin22-23/2319)

The proposal is to delete 6 posts, revise 1 and to create 7 new posts. The additional cost of these changes in 2022/23 (excluding unresolved pay awards) is £92,606. Please see table in **Appendix One** for a more detailed breakdown.

As a consequence of the proposed restructure, the establishment will increase by x 1 FTE

3.2 HR and Equalities Implications

These proposals will impact directly on staff however there is no disproportionate or potential adverse impact on anyone with a protected characteristic as no officers will be displaced or suffer a detriment, indeed, the revised structure offers opportunities for growth and development.

The grading of the new posts will be determined using the Council's agreed Job Evaluation Scheme to ensure there are no equal pay issues. All recruitment and selection processes will be undertaken in accordance with Council policy and procedures which have due regard for the requirements of equalities legislation.

Discussions have taken place between HR, Business Manager and Director regarding alternative ways to meet the aims of this restructure but it is not felt that there is another way to achieve the desired outcome.

3.3 Digital Implications

The proposed restructure will result in an increase to the establishment of x 1 FTE which will mean that additional ICT equipment, licenses and a corporate mobile phone is required.

The digital strategy action plan has no planned projects for Housing Stores directly to assist in digital transformation and it is unlikely this type of service could benefit from digital transformation to reduce the need for an additional role.

Background Papers and Published Documents

- Appendix 1 Structure Chart Current - Exempt
- Appendix 2 Proposed Structure – Exempt
- Appendix 3 Business Case for a 2nd Stores & Purchasing Technician – Exempt