

POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE
26 NOVEMBER 2020

In accordance with Section 100(B)(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Chairman has agreed to take this item as a late item of business in order to facilitate the recruitment to the proposed Community Relations Officer posts as soon as possible.

RECRUITMENT OF ADDITIONAL COMMUNITY RELATIONS OFFICERS

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To secure approval for the proposed recruitment of two additional full time permanent Community Relations Officers to increase capacity and resilience within the Health Improvement & Community Relations/HART Team as part of the restructure proposals within the wider Housing, Health & Wellbeing Directorate.
- 1.2 It is also recognised that there is some urgency to recruit to the posts in order to respond in a timely manner to the impacts of Covid 19 and the associated challenges of winter in terms of increased risk of adverse weather conditions and potential flooding which will require a Community Relations/HART response.

2.0 Background Information

- 2.1 This is the first of three reports that will come to the Policy & Finance Committee around our response and recovery from Covid-19. This report should also be considered as a direction of travel for the Council to expand the existing team not just to help with response and recovery from Covid-19 (which could be with us for a while) but to support with emergencies such as adverse weather and flooding and creating extra capacity of the team to strengthen and support role of Members in their communities to build capacity and resilience.
- 2.2 Whilst we increasingly engage with the majority of residents through digital means, it is recognised that face to face contact for some remains of critical importance and the Community Relations Team is an important part of 'our face' in local communities. As we seek to enhance the representative role of elected Members in their patches, the Community Relations Team will have an increasingly important role to play, helping to raise their profile, link local Members up with local groups and provide advice and signposting etc.
- 2.3 In order to progress the support for the proposals it is deemed appropriate to recruit the Community Relations Officers element of the wider proposals as a matter of urgency. Accordingly the following detailed and costed proposals is presented for approval in order that recruitment to posts can proceed.

3.0 Proposals

- 3.1 It is proposed that subject to Policy & Finance Committee's approval, two new Community Relations Officer posts are added to the establishment and budget provision made in the General Fund to cover future costs associated with the posts. The costs associated with the proposal are addressed in the Financial Implications section of this report.

- 3.2 It is further proposed that the recruitment exercise is progressed at pace through internal advertising and subject to satisfactory recruitment the posts be ready for deployment in January 2021.
- 3.3 As the proposed posts are additional in number to the existing Community Relations Officer posts no job evaluation process is required or negotiations with the Union.
- 3.4 A report outlining restructure proposals for HART was discussed at SLT on 15 September for consideration of additional resources. There was unanimous support for the principle of additional resources within the Health Improvement & Community Relations/HART Team in order to build capacity in three areas:
- (a) providing an enhanced level of support to those in or at risk of hardship and offering more support to local community and voluntary groups;
 - (b) boosting our interventions in the local economy through major infrastructure schemes, town centre regeneration, investment in skills and business support;
 - (c) strengthening public health and public protection (in recognition that there is likely to be a COVID 'legacy' for some time to come).
- 3.5 The remit of the roles will be expanded to include supporting individuals and families who are being resettled through our various support programmes in conjunction with the Home Office so this function is integrated into the Community Relations Team rather than being seen as a stand-alone officer role.
- 3.6 Examples of how these Community Relation Officers can be used would be in such circumstances as facilitating partnership working between parish/town councils and local amenities to provide local hubs – providing dedicated support to all involved to achieve results collaboratively. Also, to take a locality lead to build networks, share best practice and models and makes links where there are synergies between groups and agencies that work in a place.
- 3.7 The current and proposed structures of the Health Improvement & Community Relations/Hart Team is attached as **Appendices A** and **B**. The proposed structure provides flexibility to work right across the Council's objectives (climate change, health & wellbeing, community safety) in a thematic way as well as aligning to housing management areas to develop local networks and partnership working both within and externally to the Council.

4.0 Equalities Implications

- 4.1 This additional resource will provide improved support to the more vulnerable, in need and hard to reach areas of the community whilst providing employment opportunities within the district.

5.0 Digital Implications

- 5.1 There are no digital implications arising from this report.

6.0 Financial Implications FIN20-21/1840

Revenue Current Year

- 6.1 The additional cost for the two Community Relations Officers for a three month period from January through to March would be £17,500 including on-costs.

Currently there are forecast salary savings within the Housing, Health & Wellbeing General Fund service area due to various vacant posts. Sufficient budget is therefore available in order to meet the additional costs within the General Fund.

Revenue Future Years

- 6.2 For 2021/22, the additional budget requirement is £75,125 including on costs for the two posts. These posts have been included as part of the draft budget setting process for the Council's overall General Fund.

7.0 Community Plan – Alignment to Objectives

- 7.1 This report aligns to a number of objectives: Creating vibrant and self-sufficient local communities where residents look out for each other and actively contribute to the local area; reducing crime and anti-social behaviour and increase feelings of safety in our communities and improving the health and wellbeing of local residents.

8.0 RECOMMENDATIONS that:

- a) **the proposal to recruit two additional Community Relations Officers to the existing Health Improvement and Community Relations/HART Team be approved; and**
- b) **budget provision of £75,125 be made within the General Fund budget for Housing, Health and Wellbeing for the 2021/22 financial year and future years be approved.**

Reason for Recommendations

To ensure the Health Improvement & Community Relations/HART Team structure is able to deliver Business Plan and Community Plan objectives and emergency response through the HART requirement.

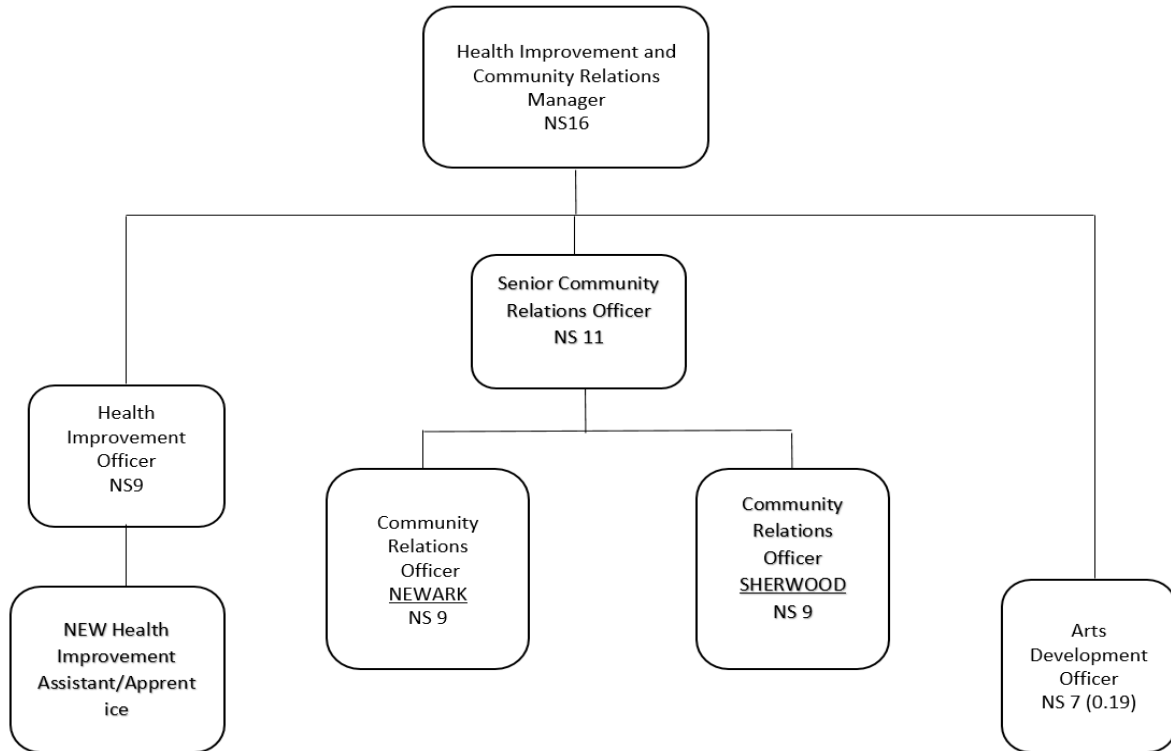
Background Papers

Nil.

For further information please contact Suzanne Shead on Ext 5520.

Suzanne Shead
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Current Community Relations Structure



Proposed Structure

