

# Decision under Delegated Powers

## Officer Requesting Decision

Katie Moore – Housing Needs Manager

## Officer Making the Decision

Alison Simmons - Head of Strategic & Private Sector Housing

## Recommendation

To approve the extension of the increase in hours of the Housing Options Officer post (H150) by up to 74 hours (to 333 hours) for an additional 6 months and recruitment of two full time equivalent officers on 24 month fixed term contracts, with effect from the start date of the successful applicants. This post is in cost centre J009 at scale 6 (SCP 26-28) and reports to the Senior Housing Options Officer post (M090).

To approve the implementation of the 2018/19 budget service pressure, approved by Council on 26<sup>th</sup> February 2018, for the costs associated with this extension.

## Reason

The Council's Housing Options Service has seen a recent increase in caseloads and temporary accommodation use. The Homelessness Reduction Act is due to be implemented on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2018. The Act places new duties on Local Authorities in relation to the prevention and relief of homelessness that are expected to lead to a significant initial increase in workloads within the Housing Options team.

## Authority for Decision

The Constitution gives delegated authority to the Chief Executive to agree changes to the establishment, within budget and without major service or policy implications, affecting no more than five posts (irrespective of their post number) in any single case. This has been sub-delegated to Heads of Services in certain circumstances, which this case falls within.

## Decision and Date



29th March 2018

Alison Simmons

Head of Strategic and Private Sector Housing

## Background

The Housing Options Team currently consists of 6 x permanent full time equivalent Housing Officers and 1 x permanent full time equivalent Senior Housing Options Officer.

The Homelessness Reduction Act will bring changes to the definition of homelessness (currently those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness within

28 days are able to make a homeless application and this threshold is being increased to 56 days) and a substantial number of new statutory duties such as duties to assess support needs, develop personalized housing plans, and prevent and relieve homelessness for all groups (regardless of priority need status). The number of homelessness applications received and the amount of casework relating to each individual application are expected to increase significantly.

Major changes to the Housing Options Team's operational processes are being made in order to ensure the service is adequately prepared for these changes and the new duties can be fulfilled.

The addition of 2 x fixed-term Housing Options Officers within the Housing Options Team will help to ensure sufficient resilience and front-line resources to manage the increasing workloads associated with the Homelessness Reduction Act.

Attempts were made to recruit these additional Officers on 12 month fixed-term contracts and subsequently on 18 month fixed-term contracts in 2017/18, but these were unsuccessful. It is hoped that a longer contract period of 24 months will attract more candidates.

### **Comments from HR**

HR Adviser: Anna Cairns (13/3/18)

The normal recruitment process should be followed regarding this.

### **Financial Implications**

The new Flexible Homelessness Support Grant has been provided to Councils to replace the previous Temporary Accommodation Management Fund. The grant for Charnwood has been confirmed as £84,000 in 2017/18 and £89,000 in 2018/19. It is estimated that Charnwood will spend no more than £12,000 on temporary accommodation management costs that were covered under the old fund in each year. The new grant can only be spent on work to prevent or tackle homelessness, and this can include staffing costs.

Charnwood Borough Council has been allocated New Burdens funding from the DCLG for the increased work that is required in relation to the new Homelessness Reduction Act. The grant allocations are £28,789 for 2017/18, £26,371 for 2018/19 and £34,006 for 2019/20. This funding can be used for staffing costs.

One-off service pressures from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018 of £34,400 for the cost of 2 officers for a 6 month period and £2,800 for essential car user allowances for 2 officers were approved by Council on 26<sup>th</sup> February 2018.

The costs for two full time officers at the top of scale 6 with essential car user allowance and other on costs for 24 months would be up to £138,400.

The Flexible Homelessness Support Grant allocation for 2017/18 was sufficient to cover the costs of these 2 posts for an initial 12 month period from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2017 to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2018. This was approved in DD055. 2 agency staff members covered these posts for the initial 3 month period between 1<sup>st</sup> October 2017 and 31<sup>st</sup> December 2017. However these posts have been vacant since 1<sup>st</sup> January 2018 (1

of these agency staff members has continued to work within the Housing Options Team since 1<sup>st</sup> January 2018, but this arrangement has been funded through underspends relating to vacancies on permanent H150 posts). Sufficient funding is therefore still available for these 2 posts for a 9 month period.

The new burdens funding allocation for 2017/18 and 2018/19 was sufficient to cover the cost of these 2 posts for a further 9 months. This was approved in DD148.

The 2018/19 service pressures of £34,400 and £2,800 are sufficient to cover the cost of these 2 posts for a further 6 months.

75% of Flexible Homelessness Support Grant 2017/18	£54,000
New Burdens Funding 2017/18	£28,789
New Burdens Funding 2018/19	£26,371
Service pressure 2018/19	£34,400
Service pressure 2018/19	£2,800
Total	£146,360

The above is sufficient to cover the cost of 2 full time officers with essential car user allowances and on-costs for a period of 24 months. This will enable 2 officers to be recruited on 24 month fixed term contracts, from the start date of the successful applicants.

### Risk Management

Risk Identified	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Management Actions Planned
This DD is not agreed and there is insufficient cover within the Housing Options Service to deal with the increase in workloads relating to the Homelessness Reduction Act. This could result in increased temporary accommodation spend, complaints and legal challenges.	Medium	Medium	The Flexible Homelessness Support Grant and New Burdens Funding can be used to cover increased temporary accommodation costs.
It is not possible to recruit to these posts on fixed term contracts.	Low	Medium	Attempt to recruit agency staff via Matrix (this may have higher cost implications but there is likely to be sufficient budget to cover this for the 24 month period).

Key Decision:

No.

Background Papers:

DD055, DD148.

