

Decision under Delegated Powers

Officer Requesting Decision:

Katie Moore – Head of Strategic Housing

Officer Making Decision:

Rob Mitchell – Chief Executive Officer

Recommendation:

The creation of a temporary Housing Reviews Officer post, at salary grade SO2, for a period of 6 months (at a cost of up to £26,200) effective from the start date of the new appointee.

Reason

To deal with reviews of housing register and homeless applications.

Authority for Decision

The Constitution gives the Chief Executive, as head of paid service, delegated authority to agree changes to the establishment, within budget and without major operational disruption or interruption of services or involving a change from direct to indirect provision or vice-versa or other policy implications.

Decision and Date

Robert Mitchell (he, him, his)
Chief Executive

05th June 2023

Background

Customers have the right to request a review of decisions made in respect of housing register applications (under part 6 of the Housing Act 1996, as amended) and homeless applications (under part 7 of the Housing Act 1996, as amended).

Decision reviews must be carried out by a senior officer who was not involved in the original decisions. In order to carry out these reviews effectively, it is necessary to have knowledge and understanding of the aspects of the housing legislation, associated statutory guidance and housing policies that are relevant to the original decisions.

These reviews are ordinarily carried out by staff members in the following posts:

- Housing Allocations Team Leader
- Housing Options Team Leader
- Housing Needs Manager.

There have been multiple staffing changes and vacancies against these posts and other management posts across the strategic housing service over the last 2 years:

- Housing Options Team Leader – became vacant October 2021 (interim cover in place from June 2022 to present)
- Housing Allocations Team Leader – became vacant March 2023 (interim cover in place from April 2023 to present)
- Housing Needs Manager – became vacant November 2022 (interim cover in place from November 2022 to present)
- Private Sector Housing Manager – post became vacant December 2021, current permanent post holder started October 2022 (interim cover was in place between May 2022 and July 2022)
- Housing Strategy and Support Manager - post became vacant November 2020, current permanent post holder started September 2022 (interim cover was not in place for any period)
- Head of Strategic Housing – post become vacant July 2022, current permanent post holder started November 2022 (interim cover was in place between July 2022 and November 2022).

These changes and vacancies have coincided with increased in workloads for senior officers across the strategic housing service relating to, for example, the COVID-19 pandemic response and recovery, the resettlement and dispersal of Afghan and Ukrainian refugees and asylum seekers, the implementation of new selective and additional licensing schemes.

These issues have contributed to a backlog of housing register and homeless decision reviews and an additional resource is required to address this backlog.

A new job profile for a Housing Reviews Officer post has been written. The profile has been evaluated by human resources and the post has been assigned salary grade SO2.

Human Resources

HR Adviser: S Choudhury (25/04/23)

Once the DD is approved management will need to follow the recruitment policy when recruiting to this vacant post.

Financial Implications

The costs (including on-costs) for 1 x full time equivalent officer at salary grade SO2 for a period of 6 months is approximately £26,200.

The council has a budget of £9,000 for legal costs relating to the housing needs service (K040 / D0504). All of this funding can be put towards the cost of this post.

The council has a budget of £7,000 for legal cost relating to the strategic housing service (K003 / D0504). All of this funding can be put towards the cost of this post.

There is expected to be an underspend on the 2023-2024 Housing Needs salary budget due to vacancies on permanent posts (J009 / A0101). This underspend is expected to be sufficient to cover the remainder of the cost of this post.

Risk Management

Risk Identified	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Management Actions
This recommendation is not approved and the service may continue to have difficulty addressing the backlog of reviews, which may result in increased reviews and appeals to the courts and associated costs and reputational damage.	High	Medium	Increase budget for legal fees relating to reviews and appeals.

Key Decision

No.

Background Papers

N/A.