

Committee:	Tenants and Leaseholders Consultative Forum
Date:	6 th January 2009
Subject:	Report on restructuring following the introduction of CIVICA IT system
Responsible Officer:	Gwyneth Allen Divisional Director Housing
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Barry MacLeod-Cullinane Portfolio Holder for Adults and Housing
Exempt:	No
Enclosures:	None

Section 1 – Summary

This report sets out the proposals for achieving a reduction in costs in delivering the housing service following the implementation of Civica through the HaRP project.

This report sets out the proposals that are the basis for staff consultation

FOR INFORMATION

Section 2 – Report

1: Background

In September 2007 the Housing Service with Adult Services, Planning and Housing Benefit contributed to a business case to implement an IT system that would result in electronic storage and retention of customer data and provide the facility for managing work flow. The business case was accepted in November 2007 and with the exception of Adults Services implementation of the chosen system, Civica, commenced in February 2008. The 'go live' date for the Housing system was 16th October 2008 and with effect from that date customer data is being stored and retrieved electronically and has the capacity to be shared with other departments within the Council. Remote and flexible

working has also become possible and relevant staff have been issued with laptop/tablet devices to enable them to work off site. The introduction of Civica benefited the two operational parts of the service: Resident Services and Housing Needs. Housing Enabling and Strategy functions have not been directly affected by the introduction of Civica.

2: Reasons for change

The introduction of Civica will result in improvements in service delivery within the Housing service. In order to maximise efficiency in resident services additional processes need to be mapped and managed through Civica. The support and development of the Civica system within the Housing Service requires a temporary post to be located in the business support team.

There have also been a number of other changes such as legislative changes, the move to join Adults Services, and emerging government initiatives that require the Housing service to ensure that it is organised and continually able to respond to the challenges ahead.

To achieve the savings required by the end of the financial year, Senior Managers have identified the removal of those posts that are no longer needed because of efficiencies enabled by the electronic transfer of data. In addition we have explored the ability of the service to generate additional income / savings through other initiatives and efficiencies.

When the HARP business case was signed off it was accepted by all involved that in return for a capital investment of £1.4m, revenue savings totaling approx. £300,000 would need to be identified with effect from 1st April 2009. The savings related to the operational functions of the Housing Service with £167,000 to be identified within Housing Needs General Fund and £134,000 from Housing Revenue Account, predominately from Resident Services. In addition to the savings identified, changes are required to fund £61,000 growth in the Housing business support and enabling teams. The overall saving is £362,000 split between Resident Services and Housing Needs.

3: Business benefits

The benefits of this change will be:

To achieve the savings required by HaRP with minimal impact on staff
To modernise the service and create more flexibility than the present service offers
To target the staff resources to those areas where it is felt they can add most value.

4: Details of the Staff Affected

The Resident Services Team comprises of 55.5 staff including caretakers and cleaners, with 20.5 staff in the sheltered housing service. These are organised in three teams:

Community and Investment (CI)
Housing Management (HM)
Leasehold services (LS)

The review affects staff in all three teams across Resident Services.

4.1 Resident Services Savings (HRA Target £195,200)

Vacant Posts

Delete one post from three Estate Services Supervisors (vacant-CI)
Delete one part-time admin post (vacant-LS)
Delete Housing Support Officer (vacant -HM)
Delete Tenant Participation Officer (vacant -CI)

Filled Posts

Delete one Caretaker Team leader post from three posts (CI)
Delete Former Tenants Arrears Officer post (HM)
Delete Lettings Officer post from within the voids team¹
Total estimated savings: £197,130

It is proposed that the above four vacant posts are deleted. This will minimize the impact of the reduction in staffing levels on permanent staff in post.

4.2 Housing Needs

Housing Needs Savings (GF target £166,000)

Filled Posts

Delete the post of Lettings Officer from within the Voids team (HRA saving)
Delete the post of Single Homelessness Project Officer (GF Saving)
Delete the post of part time Support Officer (GF saving)

Other Savings

Reduce the budget for deposit bonds
Allocation of Over Crowding Grant to fund costs of undertaking home visits and promoting Let Start scheme
Initiate a direct leasing scheme to generate additional income
Reduce allocation for B&B

TOTAL GF saving £166,020

Housing Needs is fortunate in being able to generate extra income next year, and so minimise the number of posts that currently need to be deleted. However, in following years, this extra income may no longer be available. The reduced income may be balanced by less expenditure having to be made to reduce the number of households in Temporary Accommodation. It is too early to accurately project the 2010-11 budget so further cuts in consequence of HARP implementation cannot be ruled out.

4.3 Other issues

Following the introduction of Civica there is a need for an additional post within the business support team to ensure that full and effective application of Civica is firmly embedded and that the Housing Service maximises the opportunities that Civica presents. An additional post has been included within the Housing Business Support team for a fixed term of one year from 1st April 2009.

The recent Cabinet decision to transfer Mill Farm Close to a housing association partner, coupled with the need to monitor very closely the provision of new housing either by

investigating opportunities to provide new homes on HRA estates or working with Homes and Communities Agency funding to progress development of new homes with housing association partners, has stretched the enabling team and it is proposed to increase the resources in that team by one Project Support Officer post with effect from 1st April 2009.

5. Implications for Conditions of Service

The duties of staff remaining in teams directly affected by the reduction in posts will be reviewed and reassessed following the consultation on the changes with staff. All role profiles that are affected by the proposed changes will be consulted on and evaluated.

All terms and conditions remain unaltered.

6. Time scales

The aim is to reach a final decision on the proposals by the beginning of January 2008 and then undertake the implementation stage. By 1st April 2009 new structures will be in place and Civica processes will be embedded and developed to improve service delivery.

Section 3 – Further Information

None

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

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Background Papers: None