

Report to Cabinet
14 March 2012
Report of Director - Regeneration and Development
Subject Improving the delivery of the property services function

Item

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Purpose

To advise cabinet of the review of both the housing and non-housing property services teams.

Recommendations

To agree to establish three trainee building surveyor/engineer posts in the property services section.

Financial Consequences

At the present time the financial consequences of the review of property services, including the establishment of three new posts, is likely to result in a slight increase in cost. Any increase in cost will be met from existing staff budgets supported by the Housing Revenue Account contingency fund. It is not anticipated that there will be any impact on the General Fund. Cabinet approval will be required for any additional expenditure, and this item will be reported in a future budget monitoring report.

Risk Assessment

The creation of an integrated property team, together with new trainee posts, will help to improve the capacity of the Council to manage a complex investment programme in the housing and non-housing asset portfolio.

Strategic Priority and Outcome/Service Priorities

The report helps to meet the strategic priority “Aiming for excellence – ensuring the Council is efficient in its use of resources, is effective in delivering its plans, is a good employer and communicates effectively with its customers, staff and partners”

Cabinet Member: Councillor Waters - Resources and Councillor MacDonald - Housing

Ward: All

Contact Officers

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Background Documents

None

Background

1. In early 2011 the Property Services section was formed and brought together the housing and non housing property teams. Following a settling in period an exercise to review the current working arrangements and structures has commenced. The purpose of the review is to ensure that by integrating the separate teams the council is able to make the best use of current skills and that they have the resources and support to be able to work in an efficient and effective manner.
2. In order to achieve this it is proposed to create a single property services team to cover both the housing and non-housing assets within the council's portfolio as well as the office facilities function. This proposal will present opportunities to make better use of staff skills across the entire portfolio.
3. This approach will provide greater opportunities to diversify the scope of staff currently only working on either the housing or non-housing assets, and in the longer term may provide opportunities to provide services to other areas of the council and other organisations/partners.
4. The increase in the housing capital programme (in excess of £10m) following the move to self financing for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), from 1st April 2012, has highlighted that new ways of working and additional resources will be required in order to deliver such a large programme of work. In addition to this the new procurement strategy of more, and smaller, contracts has resulted in an increase in tender processes, which results in more work in terms of drafting tender documentation.

Proposal

5. Proposals are currently being developed in conjunction with staff, human resources and Unison and it is hoped that the new structure will be operational early in the new financial year.
6. Under the current proposal the department will be broken down into two distinct teams; one covering the strategic side of the business and the other the operational side. However, unlike at present, both teams will have responsibility for housing and non-housing assets.
7. The main driver behind the review is to increase the effectiveness of the service over the short to medium term. The review will lead to a change in some reporting lines, administrative and management arrangements. All of these matters will be the subject of formal consultation with Unison and direct involvement of staff. The reason for reporting this to cabinet is that the new arrangements will also include the establishment of three new trainee posts. These trainee posts are seen as an investment in the future of the service and in terms of skills, they will provide for a more balanced workforce.