

CABINET**13 June 2012****Minute Extract****91. COUNCIL HOUSE NEW BUILD PROGRAMME AND ADDITIONAL STAFFING REQUIREMENTS (LESS EXEMPT APPENDIX)**

(Report PER216 refers)

The Chairman requested that Bath Place be excluded from the programme list, as contained as Appendix 1 to the Report. This was because this development was not considered to be appropriate to be included within the target for new homes delivery. However, he asked that a separate paper be brought forward considering the case for Housing Revenue Account (HRA) investment in these properties.

The Chairman also requested that an additional recommendation be agreed that an update Report be brought to Cabinet in 12 months time to outline progress made against the programme.

The Chief Executive advised that the Report had been considered by Personnel Committee on 11 June 2012 which had supported the recommendations. However, Members had been informed that since publication of the Report, an inaccuracy had been noticed in Exempt Appendix 3 relating to the Proposed Staff and Budget for the proposed post of Senior Valuer. This post had been incorrectly calculated as a 0.50 full time equivalent (fte) post on a Scale 6 salary rather than 1.00 fte. Consequently, Recommendation 6 of the Report to Cabinet needed to be amended as follows:

6. That approval is given to a supplementary estimate in the General Fund of £111,678 in 2012/13 (£169,782 in a full year) noting that recharges to the HRA will increase by £235,597 in 2012/13 (£277,014 in a full year).

As this was a supplementary estimate of over £100,000, the decision would require referral to Council for approval and would be considered by The Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 9 July 2012 under the call-in procedure.

The Chief Executive advised that, at Personnel Committee on 11 June 2012, it was clarified that additional staff would not be recruited until they were required. In addition, Members had agreed to insert the words "in principle" in the first recommendation to Personnel Committee in order to draw Cabinet's attention to the Committee's view that a balance needed to be struck between in-house and external provision of professional advice.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor Izard stated that he had addressed the Personnel Committee with concerns that the staffing proposals appeared to be too generous. However, he had been reassured by comments made by the Chief Executive and the Portfolio Holder for New Homes Delivery regarding the phased timing of staffing appointments. He asked for clarification about the purpose of the £100,000 requested in Recommendation 3 of the Report and also whether staff appointed to these new roles would also be able to perform existing duties.

The Head of New Homes Delivery advised that it was intended the £100,000 would be used for commissioning research and surveys which would be required on the proposed sites, before planning applications could be submitted.

The Chief Executive stated that the new staff would be undertaking a range of roles including, for example, work on the Housing Strategy and general Estates Team work. He emphasised that the proposals amounted to the equivalent of 5.8 fte staff devoted to new homes delivery.

Cabinet agreed to the following for the reasons set out above and outlined in the Report.

RECOMMENDED:

THAT APPROVAL BE GIVEN TO A SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATE IN THE GENERAL FUND OF £111,678 IN 2012/13 (£169,782 IN A FULL YEAR) NOTING THAT RECHARGES TO THE HRA WILL INCREASE BY £235,597 IN 2012/13 (£277,014 IN A FULL YEAR).

RESOLVED:

1. That the three year programme set out as Appendix 1 to the report be agreed, subject to the deletion of the reference to Bath Place, which would be brought forward separately for decision.
2. The Head of New Homes Delivery be authorised to commission the relevant professional services required to bring forward the sites in the three year programme, subject to the requirements of the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.
3. That a £100,000 budget be approved, funded from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) capital budget for delivering new council homes, to support the commissioning of relevant professional assessments required to progress immediate priorities in the proposed development programme.

4. That a further report on the decision-making process to be follow for new homes sites within the three year programme and Terms of Reference for the Cabinet (Housing Delivery) Committee be brought to Cabinet.

5. That the Council's participation in the Government's Right to Buy reinvestment offer for Local Authorities be agreed and that authority be given to the Head of Finance to sign this agreement.

6. That a Report be brought to Cabinet in 12 months time to provide an update on progress made against the programme.