

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

15 November 2004

CITY SECRETARY AND SOLICITOR'S DEPARTMENT – LAND CHARGES SECTION

REPORT OF CITY SECRETARY AND SOLICITOR

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RECENT REFERENCES:

CAB924 – Revenue Budget 2005/06 – 13 October 2004

CEN69 – City Secretary and Solicitor's Department Budget 2005/06 – 25 October 2004

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

In the budget proposals for 2005/06, a proposal is included for an additional post in the Land Charges Section to enable the computerisation project to proceed.

The growth requested for this purpose is £21,000 in 2005/06, 2006/07 and 2007/08. It would enable an additional scale 3 post of Land Charges Assistant to be created. This would release time within the existing staff to contribute to implementation of the project without there being an adverse effect on search turnaround time. It is essential that the project does not affect turnaround times – partly because of national targets to meet the 10 working day turnaround time, but principally to avoid any delays in the local property market.

The current staffing structure, with the proposed additional post, is shown in exempt Appendix 1.

In the press recently it has been suggested that there may be a downturn in the property market. However, a downturn in search levels has not been experienced to date. In any event casual staff (up to 1 f.t.e on short term contracts) are used in addition to the approved establishment during peak times to ensure turnaround – and this element provides some flexibility should there be a downturn locally.

There are also likely to be further costs for staffing support to be identified when the feasibility study goes to Cabinet – currently programmed for 15 December. The budget reports also identify a £15,000 contribution towards consultancy costs of £15,000 in 2005/06

and 2006/07 to release management time in the Legal Division. Additional support will also be required from the corporate ICT client to help implement the project and budget provision is also being made for this assistance.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1 That, subject to the approval of the growth proposal of £21,000 for this purpose in the current budget process, an additional post of Land Charges Assistant (Scale 3) be included in the approved establishment until the end of the 2007/08 financial year.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

1 CORPORATE STRATEGY (RELEVANCE TO):

- 1.1 This proposal will contribute towards meeting the Government's IEG targets and the Council's policies in the Corporate Strategy for enhancing electronic access to services.

2 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 2.1 It would be funded from the Land Charges Reserve which was established to fund this project and currently stands at £343,000.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

CSS file

APPENDICES:

Appendix 1 – Current establishment chart for the Legal Division - EXEMPT