

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE23 November 2015REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL ESTABLISHMENT FOR A TREE OFFICER
(HOUSING)REPORT OF HEAD OF LANDSCAPE AND OPEN SPACESContact Officer: SUSAN CROKER Tel No: 01962 848419RECENT REFERENCES:

None

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The purpose of this report is to request permission for additional establishment of 0.5FTE for a permanent Tree Officer (Housing) based within the Landscape and Open Spaces Team.

The cost of the post will be recharged to the Housing Revenue Account which is planning to replace existing resources it currently uses to employ consultants to undertake the work.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That approval is given for additional establishment of 0.5FTE for a permanent Tree Officer (Housing) based within the Landscape and Open Spaces Team.

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

23 November 2015

REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL ESTABLISHMENT FOR A TREE OFFICER (HOUSING

REPORT OF HEAD OF LANDSCAPE AND OPEN SPACES

DETAIL:

1. Background

- 1.1 Winchester City Council is responsible for c.5,000 trees on open spaces owned and managed by the Housing Team and there are also c.5,000 properties which need to be inspected and managed by the Tree Officer.
- 1.2 Historically, provision of tree support to the Housing Team has been difficult to deliver due to insufficient resources. Some support has been given by the Landscape and Open Spaces Team, but this has resulted in other land owned by the City Council receiving insufficient inspections and monitoring, leaving the Council open to the risk of legal challenge including the potential for significant claims for compensation.
- 1.3 Winchester City Council has a duty under Occupiers Liability Act 1957 and 1984 to inspect, monitor and deliver appropriate standards of Arboricultural management for trees owned by the Council. This includes trees within our housing land but also on our open spaces, parks, play areas and car parks.
- 1.4 The Housing Team currently engage external consultants to undertake tree inspections and to respond to tenant queries. This is an unsatisfactory system as it is costly, time consuming for the Housing officers and does not link to the tree resource within the Landscape and Open Spaces Team.

2. Future Arrangements

- 2.1 The Chief Executive, following consideration by CMT, approved a new structure for the Tree Team within the Landscape and Open Spaces Team in October 2015 which comprises one Principal Tree Officer (Grade 6); one Tree Officer (Grade 4); one Tree Officer (Housing) (Grade 4) (assuming Personnel Committee approval) and one Technician (Grade 3).
- 2.2 The new structure aims to:-
 - Improve the consistency and quality of service provided by setting standards across all tree officers and ensuring these are met;

- Make best use of experience and knowledge by ensuring the most experienced and knowledgeable officer focuses on the more significant work areas thereby minimising mistakes and complications;
- Provide value for money by minimising duplication, ensuring resources are allocated to priority work areas and ensuring the most suitable officer is allocated to the most suitable area of work;
- Allow for succession planning;
- Ensure that all land owned by the Council receives an acceptable level of record keeping, monitoring and inspection, thereby reducing the risk associated with trees and their potential impact on property and people.

2.3 The Housing Team have agreed to fund the Tree Officer (Housing) post out of existing budgets as agreed with Richard Botham (Assistant Director [Chief Housing Officer]). However, there is no spare establishment available for this post, hence the need to seek Personnel Committee approval.

2.4 This report therefore requests that a 0.5 FTE Grade 4 Tree Officer (Housing) be added to the establishment.

2.5 This post will assist the Principal Tree Officer in the management of trees owned or maintained by the Council and provide an arboricultural service to the public and the Housing Team. See Appendix i for the job description and person job specification.

2.6 The benefits of having an additional 0.5 FTE are:-

- I. To allow the City Council to assess the current situation, provide evidence for the amount of work likely to be needed and to better inform the Council how to manage trees on housing land in accordance with our legal obligations.
- II. To provide an acceptable level of support to minimise our risk as a land owner and to ensure we meet our legal and moral responsibilities as a major landlord.
- III. To provide a better and more responsive service to residents with regard to trees on our housing land and within gardens.
- IV. To reduce the work load on the housing team and ensure they have access to a responsive and effective service.
- V. To provide a greater level of expertise and experience by having the support and advice of a team of Tree Officers, this will also provide a continuity of support when the Tree Officer (Housing) is off.
- VI. To have greater control over the skills and experience of those undertaking the inspection and monitoring of the Housing trees and to help develop their skill base to suit the Council's needs.

3 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The post, if approved, will be a Scale 4 and is forecast to cost c£15k (including on-costs for a 0.5FTE) in 2016/17. This post went through the Job Evaluation process in September 2015.
- 3.2 Appendix ii sets out the financial implications of this proposal. Although the post will be managed within the General Fund the activity will be entirely related to the Housing Revenue Account and therefore the full costs of the post will be recharged across. The Housing Revenue Account is planning to use its own existing budgets relating to this work in order to cover the costs of the recharges.

4 RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

- 4.1 Outlined in paragraph 1.2 above.

5 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- 5.1 None.

6 APPENDICES:

Appendix i: Job Description and Person Job Specification – Tree Officer (Housing)
Appendix ii: Tree Officer (Housing) – Financial Appraisal



JOB DESCRIPTION

JOB TITLE:	Tree Officer (Housing) (0.5 FTE)
DEPARTMENT:	Communities Directorate
POST NUMBER:	tbc
GRADE:	tbc
ACCOUNTABLE TO:	Landscape & Open Spaces Manager
LOCATION:	City Offices

POST OBJECTIVES

To assist the Principal Tree Officer in the management of trees owned or maintained by the Council and provide an arboricultural service to the public and other Council Departments within the framework of relevant legislation, statutory requirements, national standards and in keeping with Department and Corporate Objectives.

SPECIFIC TASKS:

WCC owned and managed trees on housing land

1. Act as point of contact for all customer enquiries which relate to council trees on housing land.
2. Devise and deliver an inspection programme for the tree stock owned and managed by the Council's Housing Team. This is to include undertaking cyclical inspections of Council-owned trees and identify trees in need of remedial work, routine maintenance and emergency works.
3. Plan, specify and deliver remedial tree works through the use of external contractors on most occasions and according to assessed priorities, within timescales and to budget.
4. Draw up specifications for work to trees and secure appropriate contractors to undertake work.
5. Supervise works and liaise with contractors as necessary to monitor standards and programming according to assessed priorities and acceptable standards.
6. Work with the Technician to raise orders, ensure completed works are undertaken to a satisfactory level, and ensure payment of invoices within the appropriate timeframe.
7. Maintain and update the Council's tree inventory data using appropriate IT systems.
8. Ensure the appropriate and successful undertaking of replacement tree planting as required.

9. Advise and negotiate on the arboricultural implications of applications for development put forward by the New Housing Build Team, recommending decisions and improvements to schemes and the imposition of conditions.
10. Monitor compliance with tree protection conditions on planning permissions submitted by the New Housing Build Team, investigating non-compliance and assisting in progressing enforcement action as necessary.
11. Provide technical and professional advice on arboricultural matters to the housing team, and keep up to date with current industry standards and innovation, government policy, legislation and regulations relating to tree management.
12. Assist the Principal Tree Officer in responding verbally and in writing to enquiries from elected members, the public and Council officers in relation to housing trees.
13. To assist the Principal Tree Officer in the preparation of reports for Committee Meetings, attend Committee, undertake presentations and support the democratic process and elected members on matters relating to trees.
14. Comply with statutory requirements and regulations, policies and procedures, particularly in relation to equality of opportunity and health and safety.
15. Identify needs for improvements in working practices as necessary and make recommendations for change.
16. Keep up to date with current industry standards and innovation, government policy, legislation and regulations relating to tree management.

This job description outlines the duties required for the time being of the above post to indicate the level of responsibility. It is not a comprehensive or exclusive list and duties may be varied from time to time which do not change the general character of the job or the level of responsibility entailed.



JOB TITLE **Tree Officer Housing** **POST** **tbc**
NUMBER:
DIVISION: **Communities Directorate** **DATE:** **September 2015**

Requirements		Weighting	Assessment Method
Skills	Good oral, written and interpersonal communication skills.	3	A/I
	Good organisational skills and the ability to process information accurately.	3	A/I
	Working knowledge of Microsoft Office applications and general ICT skills.	3	A/I
	Working knowledge of databases and GIS	2	A/I
	Able to work independently as well as part of a team.	3	A/I
	Able to manage own workload and time.	3	A/I/T
	Report writing and presentation skills.	3	A/I/T
Experience and Knowledge	Excellent tree identification skills	3	A/I
	Sound understanding of tree biology	3	A/I
	IT proficient	3	A/I
	Knowledge of tree preservation protection legislation	3	A/I
	Undertaking tree surveys	2	A/I
	Developing tree survey inspection methodology	2	A/I
	Experience in local authority environment	2	A/I
Personal Qualities	Problem solving	3	I/P
	Tactful and diplomatic	3	A/I

	Enjoys completing tasks	3	I/T
	Willing to take on a challenge	3	A/I
	Customer focused	3	I
	Team Player	3	I
	Interest in the natural environment	3	A/I
Specific Job Requirements	To meet the travel requirements of the post	3	A/I
	Able to work unsocial hours	3	A/I
Qualifications	National Diploma in Arboriculture Level 3	3	A/I
	Professional Tree Inspection Level 2	2	A/I

Weighting

3 – Essential for the successful performance of the job
2 – Desirable but can be achieved through on the job training or experience
1 – Useful but not essential for successful performance of the job

Assessment

Application Form *A* *Interview* *I* *Tests* *T*

References *R* *Presentation* *P* *Evidence of Qualifications* *Q*

Financial Appraisal										
Tree Officer		Salary Incl. On-Costs								
		Financial Year		2016/17	2016/17	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	top of grade 2020/21
	Post	FTE	Grade	SCP	£	£	£	£	£	£
General Fund										
New Post										
	Tree Officer	new	0.50	4	26	13,579	14,219	14,879	15,677	16,414
	Essential Car User Allowance					1,410	1,410	1,410	1,410	1,410
	Mileage					100	100	100	100	100
Total Cost / (Savings)			0.50			15,089	15,729	16,389	17,187	17,924
Recharge to the Housing Revenue Account						(15,089)	(15,729)	(16,389)	(17,187)	(17,924)
General Fund (SURPLUS) / DEFICIT			0.50			0	0	0	0	0
				Cumulative		0	0	0	0	0
Assumptions										
New post budgeted at mid point and assumed in LGPS										
Salary costs include on costs, with 1% year on year inflation increase, and incremental progression where applicable										
Employers NI rate increase as from 2016/17										
Essential car user (ECU) commitments included										