

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

28-March 2012

CABINET (HOUSING) COMMITTEE

4 April 2012

CABINET

11 April 2012

PROPOSED NEW HOMES DELIVERY TEAM

REPORT OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND CORPORATE DIRECTOR (OPERATIONS)

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RECENT REFERENCES:

None.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This report outlines arrangements being made to facilitate the development of new Council owned and managed houses. The initial arrangements set out are being made using existing staffing resource. Further reports to future Cabinet and Personnel Committee meetings will consider more detailed arrangements and an outline programme of work for the Team.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To Personnel Committee:

- 1 That Members endorse the approach being taken
- 2 That a further report be brought to Personnel Committee's June 2012 meeting to authorise the necessary establishment changes.

To Cabinet:

1. That Members endorse the approach being taken
2. That a further report be brought to Cabinet in June updating these arrangements

To Cabinet (Housing) Committee:

1. That Members endorse the approach being taken.
2. That a further report be brought to the Committee in June updating these arrangements

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DETAIL:

1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Changes in the housing finance regime have created the opportunity for the City Council to invest in building new council houses. Members are keen to seize this opportunity, and have asked officers to plan for a significant new-build programme.
- 1.2 Having discussed how to proceed, Corporate Management Team (CMT) have concluded that a dedicated team is required, with a clear accountability and focus on delivering new homes. This team should have ready access to the necessary skills and resources (people and finances) required to make progress, and not be distracted by other operational responsibilities.
- 1.3 This report outlines the arrangements being made to set up the core of a New Homes Delivery Team, drawing on existing resources. A first task for the Team Head will be to determine the detail of staffing resources required, and a further report will be brought to Personnel Committee in June giving fuller details and seeking necessary authorisations.

2 INITIAL STEPS TO CREATE A NEW HOMES DELIVERY TEAM

- 2.1 CMT have agreed that the Head of Strategic Housing (Andrew Palmer) be asked to Head the New Homes Delivery Team, and will start in that role on 26 March. Mr Palmer's experience of housing enabling, working with Housing Associations and of community consultation, alongside his broader housing background, are essential if we are to develop and begin delivery of a building programme without delay. In his new role he will report to the Corporate Director (Operations).
- 2.2 The new Team will also include the Strategic Housing Manager and his staff. Their current responsibilities include housing enabling and

community development: these are essential elements of the work of the New Homes Delivery Team. They are likely to retain some wider responsibilities beyond the area of delivering new houses, and the Head of Team will need to ensure that the right balance is struck so that the focus on new homes is not diluted. A Senior Planning Officer is currently seconded to assist with enabling work, and it intended his secondment continue as part of the New Homes Delivery Team.

- 2.3 With this change in responsibility for the former Head of Strategic Housing, interim reporting and management arrangements have been made for those areas of activity which sat within the Strategic Housing Team but are not integral to the delivery of new homes. The Hampshire Home Choice Team, responsible for housing allocations, and the Private Sector & Homelessness Teams will both become part of the Landlord Services Team. The Head of Landlord Services will be undertaking a review of his Team over the summer, which can confirm the most appropriate management arrangements for these activities.

3 NEXT STEPS

- 3.1 One of the initial tasks of the Head of New Homes Delivery is to decide what team he will need in place over and above those joining him under the Strategic Housing Manager. If the new Team is to be effective it will need ready access to a range of dedicated expertise, including financial, legal and development/surveying skills. They may be located within that Team or draw on other Council Teams, provided the necessary advice can be accessed without delay.
- 3.2 The Head of the new Team will bring forward detailed proposals for his Team's structure at the beginning of April. The same need for ready access to advice is shared by the Head of Estates, who is managing an ambitious programme of maintenance and development of the Council's estate. Where possible, we will be looking to the relevant resource being shared. The June meetings of Personnel Committee and Cabinet will be updated on these proposed arrangements, with the necessary approvals sought.
- 3.3 The Head of New Homes Delivery will also be drawing up a detailed programme of work to allow us to make rapid progress towards commencing building. This will be reported to Cabinet in May. Members will also note that, at their meeting on 14 March, Cabinet asked that a report on the wider issues arising from the development of new homes on Council land be brought to Council on 18 April 2012. That debate will help set the parameters for our work programme.

4. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND CHANGE PLANS

- 4.1 Developing new homes is a key priority for the Council as we seek to promote active communities. It also facilitates our district's economic prosperity.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The cost of new homes delivery, including staffing costs, will be met from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), which has already made provision for these costs as part of arrangements for changes to the housing finance regime. The financial arrangements need to be compliant with the statutory ring-fence which maintains HRA funding separate from the General Fund.
- 5.2 The initial costs will be the employee costs of staff working on the new homes delivery programme, and the charge to the HRA will need to reflect time spent on this work. Some functions undertaken within the Team - for example non-HRA housing enabling, work on the Council's Housing Strategy or aspects of community development - will continue to be supported by the General Fund.
- 5.3 Officers' initial estimates of the likely time which will be devoted to new homes delivery by those Strategic Housing staff identified in this report indicate that the relevant costs come within the provision made by the HRA for supporting new homes delivery. However, detailed costs and arrangements for the funding of the full New Homes Delivery Team will be brought to Personnel Committee and, where necessary, Cabinet in June.

6. RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

- 6.1 The Council wants to develop and deliver an ambitious programme for the building of new council houses. The risks lie in delays arising from inadequate resourcing, unnecessarily bureaucratic procedures and a weakening of political commitment. The arrangements for establishing a dedicated team and ensuring our processes and procedures support delivery which this report addresses are designed to manage the first two of those risks.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

None