

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE - 11 JUNE 2012

CABINET (HOUSING) COMMITTEE – 20 JUNE 2012

DELIVERING THE HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUSINESS PLAN –
ADDITIONAL STAFFING REQUIREMENTS

REPORT OF HEAD OF HOUSING SERVICES

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RECENT REFERENCES:

CAB2287 (HSG) – Housing Revenue Account Budget 2012/13 and Business Plan –
2012/13 to 2042/43 - 1 February 2012

PER210 – The National Graduate Scheme and Apprenticeships - 28 March 2012

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan and budget for 2012 and beyond sets out how the Council intends to invest in housing services over the next 30 years. As a result of additional resources achieved through the “Self Financing” arrangement, the Council has been able to increase investment in housing services by over £7.5m each year. Proposals for resourcing a New Build housing programme are included in Report PER216 elsewhere on this agenda. In addition to this, a further £4m per annum is being invested in property and estate services. This has obviously had a significant impact on housing teams and this report proposes new staffing arrangements to ensure the additional investment can be delivered effectively.

The report proposes changes to the existing housing establishment, although no increase in the total number of posts. 5 new posts are required. Funding is already included within the HRA budget and sufficient vacant posts exist to ensure there will be no increase in establishment.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Personnel Committee:

1. That the proposals for new posts as detailed in paragraph 3 and appendix 5 of this report, be approved.
2. That proposals to delete posts numbers 214, 253, 747 and 783 from the existing establishment with immediate effect and post 273 with effect from 1 September 2012, following the retirement of the existing post holder as detailed in paragraphs 3 and 4 and appendix 5 be approved.

Cabinet (Housing) Committee:

3. That the proposed service changes be noted and funded from the £120,000 general provision included in the HRA budget for 2012/13 to the "HRA Employees" budget to fund the cost of the proposals.

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

11 June 2012

CABINET (HOUSING) COMMITTEE – 20 JUNE 2012

DELIVERING THE HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUSINESS PLAN – ADDITIONAL STAFFING REQUIREMENTS

REPORT OF HEAD OF HOUSING SERVICES

DETAIL:

1 Background

1.1 The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan for 2012 and beyond includes increases in service provision and significant additional investment in repairs and estate services. This amounts to an increase in investment of over £4m each year (not including new homes delivery). Also included in the 2012 budget was a general provision of £120,000 in the base budget to meet increased staffing needs, at that time unidentified. In addition, PER210 dated 28 March 2012 approved an additional £35,000 supplementary estimate to support graduate recruitment and apprentices in housing. This paper brings forward recommendations for staffing changes in these areas to meet additional demand. Every effort has been made to absorb additional demands and the proposals in this paper can be achieved within existing establishment and well within total budget provision.

1.2 Reviews of other key housing services, including Community Alarm/Lifeline, Private Sector Housing, Choice Based Lettings and Homelessness are currently underway and proposals on achieving potential efficiencies in these areas will be brought forward in the autumn. However, the recommendations in this paper need to be considered more urgently.

2 HRA Business Plan and Increased Investment on Services to Tenants

2.1 Following the implementation of “Self Financing for Housing” in April 2012, the Council has been able to significantly increase investment in housing services for the first time in many years. The HRA Business Plan increased investment in the Council’s Repairs programme from £8m per annum in 2011/12 to over £11m per annum for the next 10 years. This will fund the provision of significantly increased programmes for kitchen/bathroom replacements, heating system upgrades, window/door replacements and other works aimed at maintaining the Decent Homes standard. In addition, the Plan also included provision for increased investment on estate improvements. Overall, the Business Plan has resulted in an additional £4m

each year being invested in housing services (not including the £3.2m for new build).

- 2.2 The Property Services and Tenancy Services teams responsible for delivering these services were set up and resourced to deliver the previous lower level of investment. Detailed independent benchmark comparisons completed by Housemark (funded by the Chartered Institute of Housing) demonstrated that costs and staff numbers for both teams were below average for the sector, both when compared to other local authorities and to other registered providers.
- 2.3 Along with all Council services, the Housing Services function has been actively managing vacant posts over recent years. Whilst some recruitment, particularly to essential care and support roles has been made, a number of posts have been held vacant and there are currently 9 vacant posts in this service. However, the significant increase in investment now means that some additional resource is required to ensure that the investment is committed and delivers value for money to tenants.
- 2.4 The proposals in this report recommend the recruitment of 5 new permanent positions (4.61 total fte) to address areas where the increased investment is impacting on existing teams. This will not result in any increase in establishment. The increased net cost can be met from within existing budget provision (the provisional sum of £120,000 included in the 2012/13 budget specifically for this purpose as described in 1.1 above).

3 Summary of Proposals

- 3.1 New Posts to be funded from £120,000 provision included in 2012 base budget:

Senior Surveyor – Area Team Leader	£43,000
Senior Surveyor – Compliance/H&S	£43,000
Apprentices x 2	£16,000
Estate Services Manager	£43,000
Estate Monitoring Officer x 0.61	£22,000
IT Support Officer	Already in Employees budget

Vacant Posts /Establishment to be deleted:

253 – Surveyor	£34,000
783 - Older Persons Support Officer	£22,000
273 - Contract Surveyor	£29,000 (with effect from 1/9/12)
214 - Admin Technician	In establishment but no budget
747 - Mobile warden x 0.61	£15,000

Total Net Cost: £67,000

4 Vacant Posts

- 4.1 The Surveyor post (253) included above has held been vacant for a year as part of the reorganisation of Property Services whilst the impact of the new programmes was assessed. The Contract Surveyor post (273) is a full time post but currently only filled part time. The post holder retires in August and has formally resigned from this position.
- 4.2 The administrator post (214) and both Older Persons posts (783 and 747) have all been held vacant for some time and determined as surplus to requirements following changes to the Sheltered Housing service in the last year.

5 **Further Supporting Information**

- 5.1 **Property Services** – The team were reorganised in 2010 when the Repairs programme totalled £8m annually. This introduced a generic area based approach and the area teams were intended to undertake full stock surveys every 5 years (20% each year). The new approach has proved generally successful, with the exception of mechanical and electrical (M&E) services.
- 5.2 However, the significant increase in budget provision from April 2012 has really challenged the current teams and specifically the increased programme for boiler replacement and renewable energy has clearly highlighted the need for M&E qualified staff to come out of the area teams and operate district wide. To achieve this and to ensure sufficient resource is available to support all increased programmes, an additional senior surveyor is required.
- 5.3 Another real challenge and a serious concern with existing staff is one of statutory compliance and the amount of work involved in monitoring programmes and risk assessment. There is currently a part time surveyor who leads work on fire risk assessments, legionella, water testing, asbestos and contract risk assessment. Ensuring that comprehensive policies and procedures are in place and consistently adhered to is regulated by the HSE, who have taken a number of serious prosecutions recently. A neighbouring social landlord has been subject to constant regulation and supervision over the last year and their procedures are far more comprehensive than ours. In addition, there have also been a number of very serious fires and accidents in social housing, particularly in high rise blocks. This is an essential area and it is recommended that this post be made full time (it is in the establishment but not in the employee budget).
- 5.4 **Asset Management/Stock Surveying** – The implementation of the new Keystone system has highlighted how out of date existing stock data is and it is now proposed to procure a 100% stock survey this year with a view to training existing staff to maintain the information once it is up to date. This will be funded from the existing repairs programme. However, the approach will result in a very significant increase in data analysis, data entry and the general admin burden on the team in the short term. The payback will be a

real advantage to future programming and it is recommended that additional support be provided to underpin the existing team by recruiting two apprentices, initially as admin apprentices but with the potential to take on a more technical apprenticeship in year 2 if demands remain.

- 5.5 **Estate Services** – In addition to the core functions of tenancy enforcement, community relations, arrears management and property lettings, the existing Tenancy Services team are also responsible for managing communal buildings, caretaking services, estate management, grounds maintenance and other services that tenants fund through their service charges.
- 5.6 It is fair to say these services have not received the priority given to tenancy enforcement, arrears management and community relations.
- 5.7 The Estate Improvement programme has helped address this and is proving very popular and effective. A recommendation to increase investment in this programme will be brought to Cabinet (Housing) Committee in June or September. However, delivering the programme and managing estate services effectively is a real challenge and has been highlighted by tenants and TACT as a weakness currently. Tenants are constantly demanding improved services in relation to grounds and cleaning and it is clear that these services need more effective management.
- 5.8 It is therefore proposed to split the current Tenancy Services function into Tenancy Services (including enforcement, arrears, supported tenancies, tenant liaison and involvement) and Estate Services (Communal housing, grounds, cleaning, caretaking, concierge services, estate improvements). This will allow a more comprehensive response to tenant requests, demonstrate a commitment to services directly funded by tenants and address existing weaknesses in service provision.
- 5.9 To achieve this, two additional posts are required as follows:
- a) Estate Services Manager to assume overall responsibility for operational estate services, reporting to the current Tenancy Services Manager. This post will be responsible for ensuring HRA services work closely with and compliment all other neighbourhood related services across the Council.
 - b) An Estate monitoring officer who will be responsible for ensuring service specification, monitoring and contract compliance, tenant liaison on estate issues and liaison with the environment team. This will be a part time role based on 3 days weekly and will compliment the existing part time role responsible for the estate improvement programme.
- 6 **IT Support** – The breadth of housing services and their reliance on a number of key support systems places real challenges on operational staff. The pace of legislative change in housing results in regular updates, upgrades and

system changes, all of which require testing and careful management to ensure they support housing work effectively. An additional post was approved as part of the business plan and included in the 2012 budget and is included in this paper for completeness.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

7 SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND CHANGE PLANS (RELEVANCE TO):

7.1 The Landlord elements of the Housing services team cross cuts many of the community strategy and change plans.

8 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

8.1 The proposals in this report will result in a net increase in employee costs to the HRA of £22,000 in 2012/13 (assuming a start date of August 2012) increasing to a full year cost of £69,300 in 2013/14 and a maximum annual cost of £78,500 (at today's price levels, assuming all posts reach the top of the grade), as set out in Appendix 5. This will be funded from the budget of £120,000 per annum included in the base HRA budget for this purpose. The remainder of this budget will be retained pending further consideration of the potential impact on the service of emerging issues such as Welfare Reform. An additional supplementary estimate of £35,000 was approved in April (PER210 refers) to fund recruitment of apprentices and a graduate trainee. It is likely that all costs associated with this recruitment can be contained within the original £120,000 provision. However, this will be kept under review and a final position confirmed as part of a revised budget to be brought to the Cabinet (Housing) Committee in September.

9 RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

9.1 The key risks associated with not progressing the proposals set out in this report relate to non delivery of services and delays and backlogs with the increased repairs programme. More importantly, if more resource is not invested in the compliance role within Property Services, the potential consequences could be very significant and ultimately life threatening.

10 TACT COMMENT

10.1 This matter has not been considered by the full TACT group. However, the chair and vice chair, Judith Steventon Baker and John Bond, have reviewed the proposals.

10.2 It is clear that if the Council is to build new homes and invest more in repairs and estate services, Housing teams need the right resources to do this well. TACT has long been calling on the Council to demonstrate its commitment to Council housing by building new homes. It has also regularly challenged the

Head of Housing Services and other housing officers to do more to improve the quality of our homes and our estates. We are pleased to see the additional investment in housing and recognise that some additional staff will be required to deliver this.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

There are no background papers

APPENDICES:

Appendix 1 Existing structure chart for Property Services

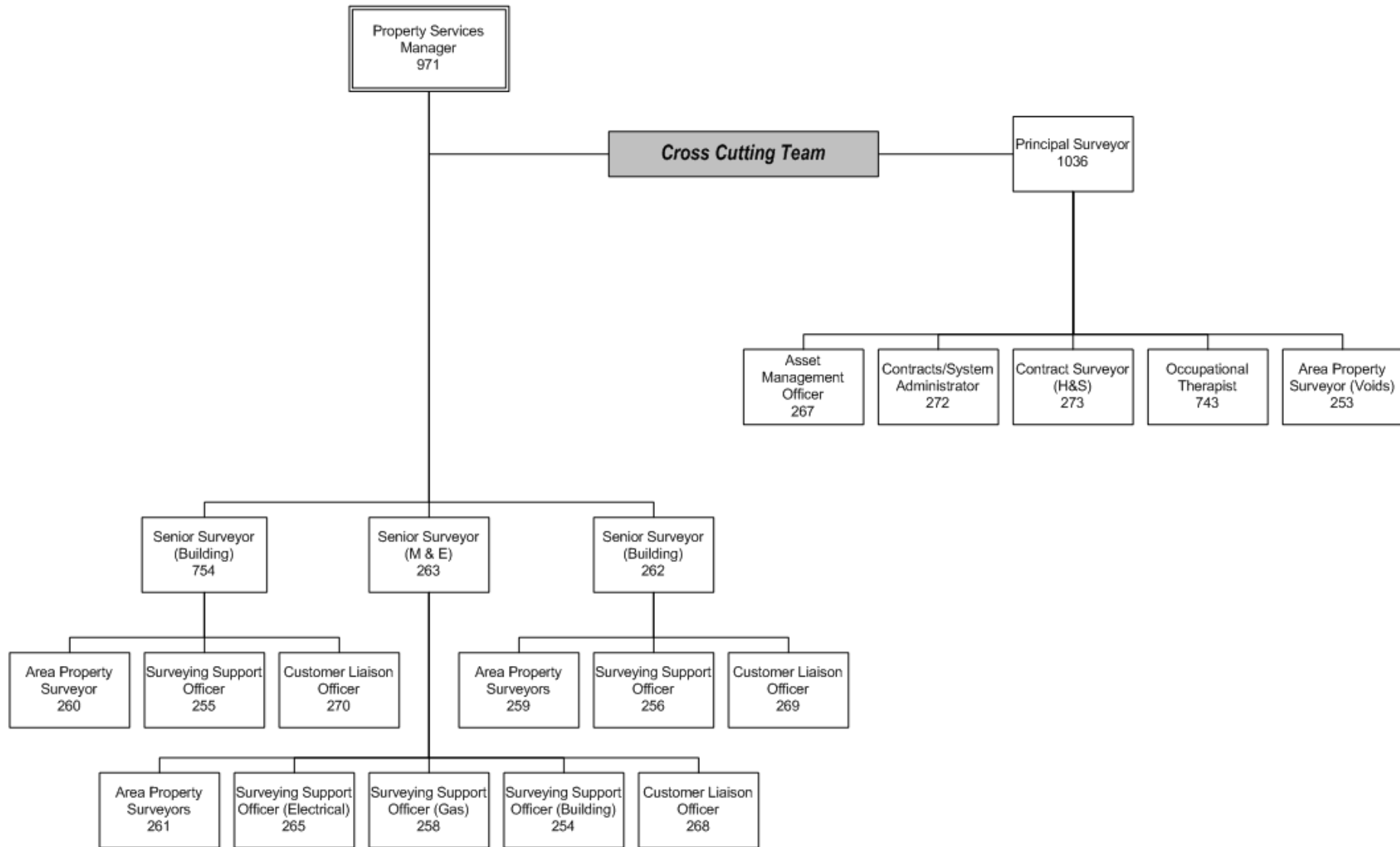
Appendix 2 Proposed New structure chart for Property Services

Appendix 3 Existing structure chart for Tenancy Services

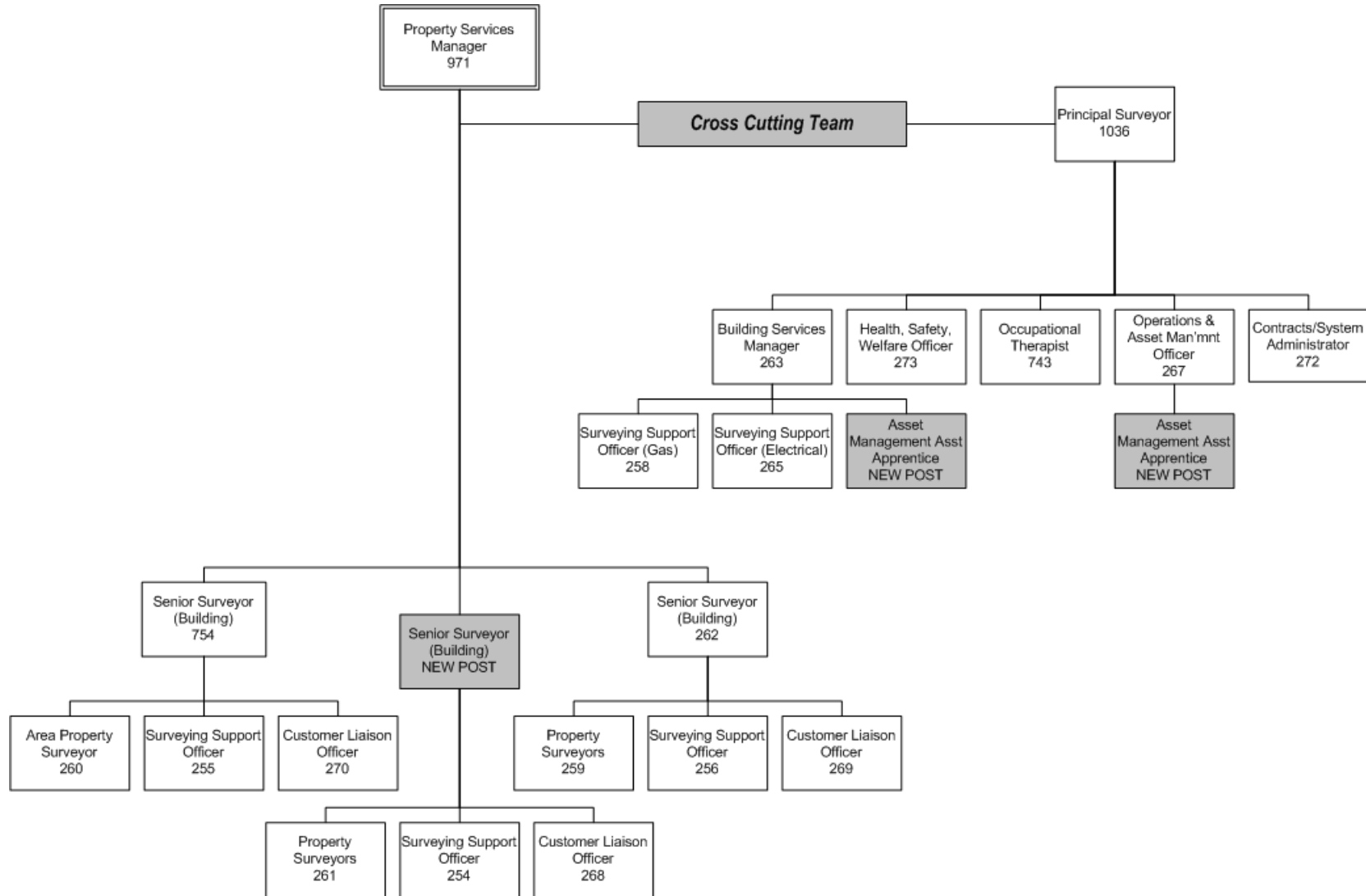
Appendix 4 Proposed New structure chart for Tenancy Services

Appendix 5 Financial information

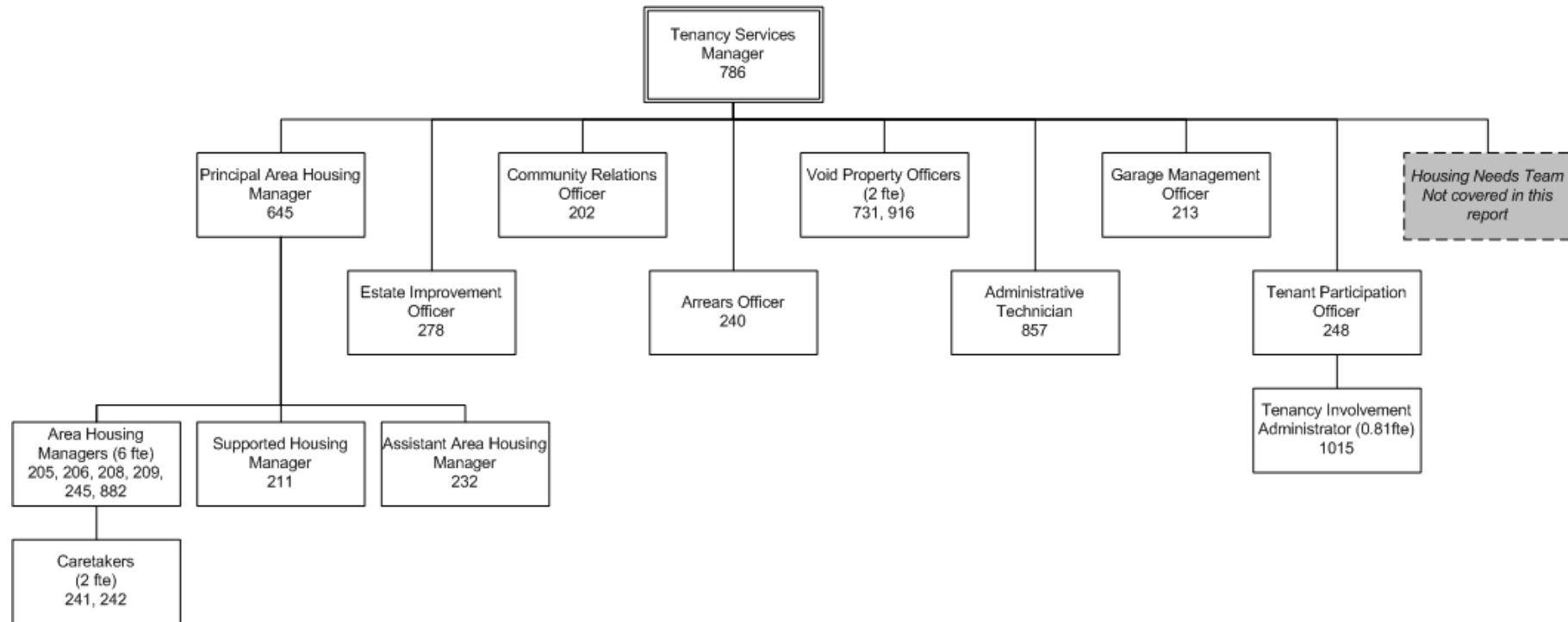
Property Services – Existing Structure Chart



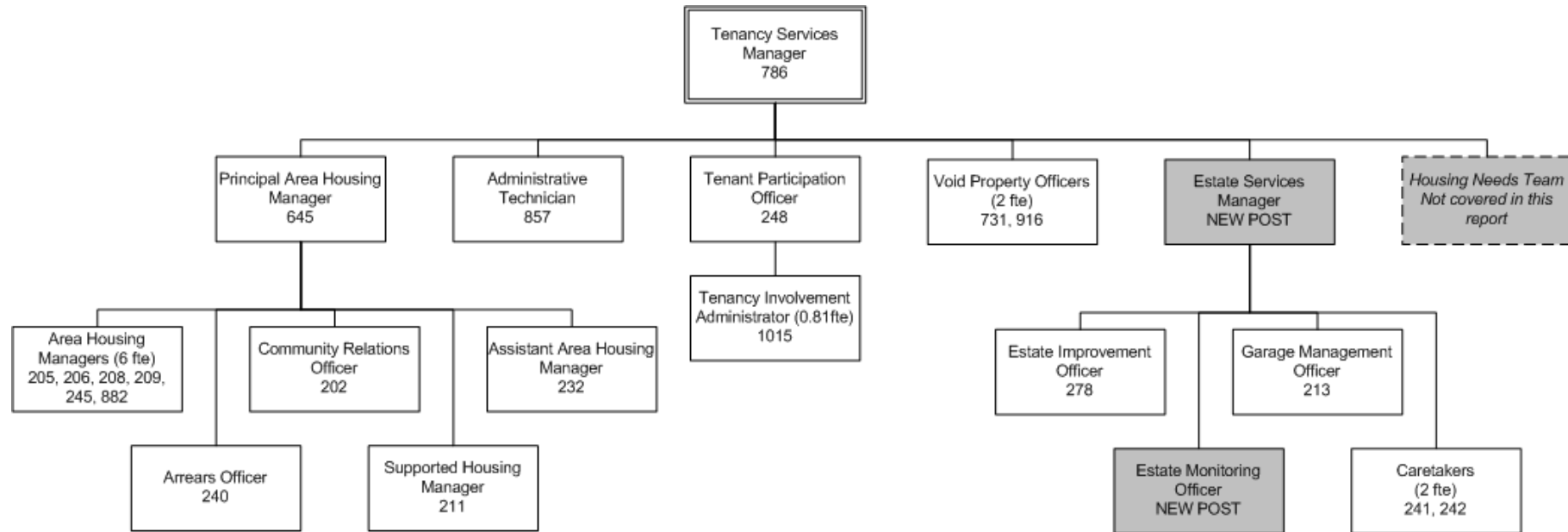
Property Services – Proposed New Structure Chart



Tenancy Services – Existing Structure Chart



Tenancy Services – Proposed New Structure Chart



Financial Information**HRA - Additional Staffing Requirements**

Proposed New Staffing & Budget	Post	FTE	Grade	SCP	Salary Incl. On-Costs					Phase	
					Financial Year	2012/13	2012/13	2012/13	2013/14		
					£	£	£	£	£		
Senior Surveyor - Area Team Leader	new post	1.00	6	41	28,813	44,305	45,393	46,494	47,524	01/08/2012	incl. Essential Car User allowance
Senior Surveyor - Compliance / H&S	new post	1.00	6	41	28,813	44,305	45,393	46,494	47,524	01/08/2012	incl. Essential Car User allowance
Apprentice 1	new post	1.00			5,333	8,000	8,000	8,000	8,000	01/08/2012	
Apprentice 2	new post	1.00			5,333	8,000	8,000	8,000	8,000	01/08/2012	
Estate Services Manager	new post	1.00	6	41	28,813	44,305	45,393	46,494	47,524	01/08/2012	incl. Essential Car User allowance
Estate Monitoring Officer	new post	0.61	5	34	14,785	22,627	22,177	22,177	22,177	01/08/2012	incl. Essential Car User allowance
IT Support Officer	tbc	-	4	26	0	0	0	0	0		
		5.61			111,891	171,542	174,356	177,659	180,749		
Vacant Posts / Establishment to be deleted											
Void Property Surveyor - Vacant	253	-	1.00	5	34	(35,936)	(35,936)	(35,936)	(35,936)	(35,936)	incl. Essential Car User allowance
Older Persons Support Officer - Vacant	783	-	1.00	3	18	(21,798)	(21,798)	(21,798)	(21,798)	(21,798)	incl. Essential Car User allowance
Contract Surveyor	273	-	0.61	6	45	(17,008)	(29,156)	(29,156)	(29,156)	(29,156)	31/08/2012 incl. Essential Car User allowance
Admin Technician	214	-	1.00	3	18	0	0	0	0	0	In Establishment no budget
Older Persons Support Officer - Vacant	747	-	0.61	3	22	(15,356)	(15,356)	(15,356)	(15,356)	(15,356)	incl. Essential Car User allowance
		-	4.22			(90,098)	(102,246)	(102,246)	(102,246)	(102,246)	
Cost / (Saving) BEFORE One Off Costs		1.39				21,794	69,296	72,110	75,413	78,503	
Redundancy / Severance / Other Costs & (Other Savings)						0	0	0	0	0	
						0	0	0	0	0	
TOTAL COST / (SAVING)						21,794	69,296	72,110	75,413	78,503	

Assumptions

All new posts budgeted at mid point and assumed in WCC pension scheme, unless specifically noted

Salary costs include on costs, with zero year on year inflation increase, and incremental progression where applicable