

REPORT TITLE: NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES – ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMME

1 MARCH 2022

REPORT OF CABINET MEMBER: Councillor Kelsie Learney, Cabinet Member for Housing and Asset Management

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WARD(S) ALL

PURPOSE

This report sets out to provide an overview of the roles and responsibilities of the Neighbourhood Services team.

The report proposes improvements to current service provision in relation to community development and resident engagement, delivered through the introduction of two new Neighbourhood Services Engagement Officer roles.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That the Policy Committee are asked to comment upon the proposed role and remit of two additional officers within the Neighbourhood Services team.
2. That the Policy Committee highlight collaborative opportunities for community engagement across Council teams to avoid duplication of services.

1 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

1.1 Cabinet Report (CAB3334) Housing Revenue Account Budget 2022/23 has identified £0.300m to support initiatives addressing issues arising from the Housing White Paper, which includes funding for two posts within the Neighbourhood Services team.

1.2 The funding would be required to cover:

- Two FTE grade 4 posts – anticipated cost per annum £70,000
- Two electric fleet vehicles - £7,400 per annum plus charging costs
- Training, uniform, other one off costs - £3,200

2 SUPPORTING INFORMATION:

Background

2.1 The Neighbourhood Warden Service was merged with the Housing Estate Service in 2019 as part of the corporate restructure of council services. The teams were merged to provide a better resourced and joined up service and to reduce duplication of effort as the two teams were delivering similar functions to council tenants and to the wider community across the district.

2.2 The merger effectively streamlined the tasks now undertaken by the reformed Neighbourhood Services team. These core functions are summarised as:

- Health and safety checks at general needs and sheltered housing sites with communal areas ensuring compliance and fire safety management
- Proactively managing and leading on anti-social behaviour (ASB) issues in conjunction with partner agencies
- Investigating and enforcing fly tip cases – this responsibility together with the resource will shortly be moving to the Environment team
- Contract compliance, in particular grounds maintenance and cleaning in communal areas
- Delivering the estate improvements programme, £400k per annum is set aside for these works until 2029/30 with allowances for slippage and inflation over the period
- Ensuring statutory duties in relation to crime and disorder and community safety are met

- Assisting other Housing and Council priorities such as COVID related support during the pandemic, new homes programme.

- 2.3 The team is currently resourced through 12 officers and a Service Manager. A structure chart for the Neighbourhood Services team is included as Appendix 1.
- 2.4 The team is funded from both the Housing Revenue Account and the General Fund. In addition, a further £40,000 is allocated to the Neighbourhood Service from the Town Forum. A breakdown of staffing budgets is included in Appendix 2.

Community Engagement Focus

- 2.5 Following the successful merger of Estate Services, Neighbourhood Services and Community Safety, the remodelled Neighbourhood Services team is now fully integrated and staffed at capacity. A number of emerging factors have contributed to a review of the current service to identify gaps in delivery and highlighting future areas for investment and improvement opportunities.
- 2.6 The publication of the Housing White Paper – ‘The charter for social housing residents’ in November 2020 coupled with the pandemic have identified many social housing tenants who are struggling without access to suitable green open spaces to enjoy, having to cope with loneliness, isolation and ASB. Investing in community development and resident engagement will help to ensure our neighbourhoods are safe and inviting places to live and our communities are supported.
- 2.7 At present there is limited capacity within the Neighbourhood Services team to deliver functions outside of the core activities. Historically the Neighbourhood Wardens delivered proactive engagement services to communities, often in partnership with members, other community leaders and partnership agencies. Although the team endeavour to provide community focused services, this is restricted to the resources available, competing demands and at times corporate priorities.
- 2.8 Functions delivered include:
- Welcome to the neighbourhood – support to students living in private houses in multiple occupation. Previously involved visits and a booklet to students detailing Council services and responsibilities. Since 2020 the team have focussed on digital support only in terms of safety messaging.
 - City centre patrols – no longer a dedicated patrol officer working exclusively in the city centre. Officers within the team do work in collaboration with partnership agencies to address ASB, drug and alcohol related issues across the city and surrounding areas. New post recently identified within the Environment Service to lead in this area.

- Estate patrols – reduced patrol activity specific to the estates of Stanmore, Weeke, Winnall and Highcliffe, usually twice weekly. Other areas in the district receive a reactive presence only, when for example responding to issues of community concern or crime and disorder activity.
- Community engagement – the provision of proactive engagement/community contact in the form of street briefs, walkabouts, supporting events and forums is no longer deliverable. Engagement services are predominantly reactive, such as attending occasional public meetings on request, delivering enforcement powers and responding to ASB complaints.

Details of Proposal

- 2.9 CAB3334 Housing Revenue Account Budget 2022/23 recommends a proposal to fund £0.300m new initiatives around the Housing White Paper and investing in additional resources. The additional HRA funding provides the ability to fund two additional Neighbourhood Services posts and an opportunity to establish a broader and targeted community engagement offer.
- 2.10 It is proposed the two new posts, Neighbourhood Services Engagement Officers, would be focussed on delivering community engagement opportunities across the district. These initiatives would be planned and should meet local need with evidenced service outcomes.
- 2.11 There would be an expectation that the post holders would be CSAS accredited, in line with other Neighbourhood Officer roles to ensure resilience across the wider team. Both posts would also be expected to work in collaboration with other council services/teams, such as the Wellbeing and Social Inclusion Officer (Housing Tenancy Sustainment Service), Tenant Engagement team (Housing) and the Council's Community Service.
- 2.12 The post holders would have a number of shared responsibilities for community engagement activities across the whole district, including:
- Partnership engagement – working collaboratively with a diverse range of partner agencies to achieve identified community outcomes
 - Community events – working with other council services to support organising and attending events, groups and meetings. Identifying and establishing new events and groups where service gaps and need exists
 - City and town forum patrols – increased visible presence on estates, proactive patrolling for community reassurance and deterring crime and anti-social behaviour
 - Street meets and walkabouts – plan, hold and promote opportunities for communities to voice their concerns about local issues

- Campaigns – organise targeted activities in relation to specific local issues or wider council and national campaigns
- General communication, planning and delivery – effective liaison with schools, community centres, neighbourhood forums on issues that are important to them

2.13 It is envisaged that each post will have a specialism. Either being the single point of contact for Winchester University and district colleges such as Peter Symonds, Winchester School of Arts, Sparsholt or the Parish and Town council's across the district.

2.14 The team will seek views from Cabinet Members, local Ward Councillors and TACT Members, together with council officers on the development of the Neighbourhood Services Engagement roles. Consultation opportunities and feedback will assist with the development of the roles and responsibilities of the new posts and future service planning.

3 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

3.1 The option for community development to be delivered within the current staffing structure is rejected. It is not realistic for community development and engagement functions to be delivered by the current 5.6 FTE officers. The team is currently resourced to deliver reactive services based on their core functions. A reactive only service is unable to fully meet the requirements outlined in the Housing White Paper or meet Member and community aspirations.

3.2 Maintaining current service provision with no enhancements for community engagement is not recommended. From 2023 a new consumer standard for social housing will be introduced. Landlords will be required by the regulator to assess their performance in line with 22 tenant satisfaction measures. Responsible neighbourhood management is one of five themes covering ASB, keeping communal areas clean, safe and well maintained and making a positive contribution to neighbourhoods. Poor performance in these areas is likely to lead to the regulator imposing penalties and special measures on the landlord.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:-

Previous Committee Reports:-

[CAB3334 - Housing Revenue Account \(HRA\) Budget 2022/23 - 17 February 2022](#)

Other Background Documents:-

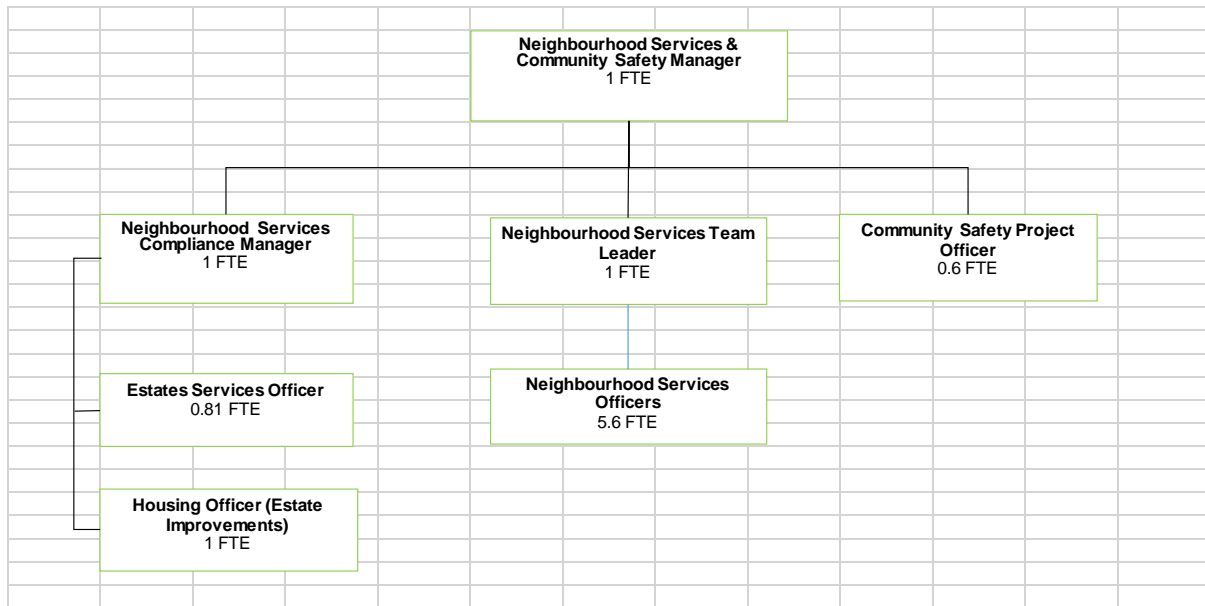
None

APPENDICES:

Appendix 1: Neighbourhood Services team structure
Appendix 2: Neighbourhood Services team funding

APPENDIX 1

Neighbourhood Services team structure



APPENDIX 2

Neighbourhood Services post budgets

	Post No.	Post	CC	FTE	Recharge / Notes
GF	141	Nhd Services & Community Safety Manager	3157	1.00	HRA recurring recharge 50%
	131	Community Safety Project Officer	3157	0.61	
	145	Neighbourhood Services Team Leader	3159	1.00	HRA recurring recharge 40%
	146	Neighbourhood Services Officer	3159	1.00	HRA recurring recharge 100%
	705	Neighbourhood Services Officer	3159	1.00	
	1006	Neighbourhood Services Officer	3159	1.00	
				5.61	
HRA	645	Neighbourhood/Estates Compliance Officer	2560	1.00	
	1112	Estate Services Officer	2560	0.81	
	278	Housing Officer (Estate Improvements)	2560	1.00	
	1351	Neighbourhood Services Officer	2560	1.00	
	241	Neighbourhood Services Officer	2560	1.00	
	242	Neighbourhood Services Officer	2560	0.61	
				5.42	