
REPORT TO:	HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM: 9
DATE OF MEETING:	21st APRIL 2016	CATEGORY: RECOMMENDED
REPORT FROM:	DIRECTOR of HOUSING & ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES	OPEN
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:	MIKE HAYNES (01283 595775) mike.haynes@south-derbys.gov.uk	DOC:
SUBJECT:	PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE DELIVERY OF HOUSING SERVICES	REF:
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	ALL	TERMS OF REFERENCE: HC

1.0 Recommendations

- 1.1 Members are asked to consider and approve a revised model for the delivery of the Council's Housing Services.

2.0 Purpose of the Report

- 2.1 Members are being asked to approve proposals to revise the way Housing Services are delivered to the Council's housing tenants and applicants as the service looks to meet the changing demands of the social housing sector nationally, and ensure the service is resilient, fit for purpose, and has the continued flexibility to meet local service demands.
- 2.2 Whilst the Housing Service has a proven track record of providing cost efficient and high performing services to the community and those people living in Council owned properties, of great importance at this time is the need to ensure resilience is built into the service. This resilience will cover the impact of policy changes on the Council, such as the roll-out of Universal Credit, without having a negative impact on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) or General Fund (GF).
- 2.3 The proposal detailed within this report will position the Council into a new service delivery model to meet these objectives, whilst also taking the opportunity to align resources to the achievement of strategic objectives and targets as detailed in the Council's refreshed Corporate Plan.

3.0 Detail

- 3.1 The Council's front line Housing Services have for several years been delivered through a model whereby Housing Officers manage tenancies in a geographically located 'patch', with support from a centralised service for repairs, maintenance, and tenancy sustainment.

- 3.2 In advance of what is probably the most important policy change to the housing sector since Housing Benefit payments were introduced, staff from within the Council's Housing Services team have been considering how best to meet the challenges the introduction of Universal Credit will bring.
- 3.3 In considering options for the service, Officers were mindful of the fact that approximately 65% of its Council housing tenants are in receipt of full or partial Housing Benefit, and this amounts to a sum in the region of £8m per year. With the housing element of Universal Credit being paid directly to tenants, there is a very real concern that some of this £8m income will be at risk, as there is a strong possibility that some tenants will refrain from paying their rent. The risk to the Council's HRA income cannot be underestimated.
- 3.4 Over a period of 3 to 4 months staff and tenants have, through a series of meetings, away-days, think tanks and one-to-one discussions, looked to develop a model for the service which concentrates resources where it is felt they will be required.
- 3.5 A challenge for Officers has been to develop a model and staffing structure which does not increase staffing budgets. Given that South Derbyshire District Council has the lowest cost front line services amongst its peer group, this has been a challenge with some degree of difficulty.
- 3.6 Officers recognise that Government policy is a 'channel shift' for the Housing sector. Proposals outlined within this report, which recommend moving to a 'locality model' for delivering front line housing services, have been designed following input from all staff within the Housing Service in order to meet the challenges Government policy change will bring.
- 3.7 Locality models group staff from various disciplines into one team, focusing resources in a particular geographical location. Grouping service provision in this way will improve services for customers and residents, enhance a customer based approach, improve communication, and build resilience and flexibility between the services. These models are proven to be well received by tenants and members of the community, providing a single focal point for a range of services. Taking this joined up approach also enables efficiencies to be gained in the costs and speed in which services are delivered to the end user.

- 3.8 Proposals are for the Council's Housing Services to be divided into 3 localities, covering the following areas:

Area 1

Hatton, Hilton, Etwall, Willington & Findern, Stenson, Aston, Melbourne, and Repton.

Area 2

Midway, Hartshorne, Woodville. Church Gresley, Castle Gresley, and Linton.

Area 3

Swadlincote, Newhall, Stanton, and The Seales.

- 3.9 The proposed locality model for delivering 'front line' housing management services within South Derbyshire is shown at Appendix 1 to this report.

- 3.10 Each locality will deliver the services of housing management, income collection, tenancy sustainment, and repairs and maintenance.
- 3.11 A Services Manager will be allocated to manage each locality, and to manage the interaction between the services within each locality. Key to the success of this model will be the recruitment of Officers with the skills, knowledge, experience, and attributes required.
- 3.12 In order to meet the challenges facing the service, and to ensure the staff with the required experience are in post, proposals will be put before this Committee on the 9th June 2016 by way of an Exempt Report with a recommendation to restructure the Housing Service.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 There are no financial implications relating to this report.

5.0 Corporate Implications

- 5.1 The recommended changes will ensure the service is fit for purpose and able to meet the objectives of the Council's Corporate Plan, whilst also providing for resilience against the impact of changes being introduced through Universal Credit and the impact of Welfare Reform legislation.

6.0 Community Implications

- 6.1 The changes being proposed are designed to have a positive impact on Council tenant's and housing applicants as Officers seek to develop a model of service delivery that allows for greater interaction between the customer and the Council's housing service.

Appendices

1. Locality Model for South Derbyshire Housing Services