

Vibrant and Sustainable City Scrutiny Panel

11 February 2016

Report title	Housing Support Services Review	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Peter Bilson Economic Regeneration and Prosperity	
Wards affected	All	
Accountable director	Lesley Roberts, Strategic Director of Housing	
Originating service	Housing Services /Wolverhampton Homes (WH)	
Accountable employee(s)	Mark Henderson	Director of Housing
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Report to be/has been considered by	City Housing Board	24 February 2016
	Strategic Executive Board	To be arranged
	WH Board	To be arranged
	WH Finance Committee	9 March 2016

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Scrutiny Panel is recommended to:

1. Consider early ideas and thoughts for a collaborative approach to providing housing options, advice and support services for those in housing need and comment and challenge as deemed appropriate.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to give members of Scrutiny Panel an opportunity to consider, comment and inform a review being jointly undertaken to determine how best to provide housing support and advice before any proposals are developed further and before any decisions are made.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Following the introduction of a dual role of Strategic Director of Housing for Wolverhampton Homes' Chief Executive in October 2015, a review of the way in which housing advice and support is provided by Wolverhampton Homes and City of Wolverhampton Council has been commissioned.
- 2.2 The review is being jointly undertaken by Mark Henderson, Director of Housing at Wolverhampton Homes, and Anthony Walker, Homelessness Strategy & External Relationships Manager. The review has also taken the opportunity to incorporate planned reviews of homeless services delivered by the Council and lettings service currently provided by Wolverhampton Homes.

3.0 Progress, to date.

- 3.1 Objectives of Review are to:

- Undertake a customer focussed assessment of existing City of Wolverhampton Council and Wolverhampton Homes service provision
- Examine existing service delivery mechanisms and customer service points
- Review the accessibility of service for customers and elected members
- Identify existing structures and reporting lines and if appropriate propose an alternative structure
- Achieve a detailed understanding of all funding sources
- Establish areas of expertise and best practice
- Identify potential shortcomings and subsequent areas for improvement
- Expose any areas of duplication and identify any potential efficiency gains
- Review policy and opportunity for discharging homeless duty more widely in private sector
- Review provision and management of temporary accommodation
- Embrace Council customer transformation, exploit and utilise opportunities for improved service
- Examine existing methods of intervention aimed at tenancy sustainment

- 3.2 Drivers for Change are:

- Greater collaboration of services following changes in October 2105 and dual Chief Executive /Strategic Director of Housing role
- Improving access and outcomes for service user and members

- Realise efficiencies and generate savings by identifying and eradicating duplication
- City Council's customer transformation to handle Tier 1 and Tier 2 enquiries from Homeless Services
- Review of lettings service operated by Wolverhampton Homes
- Digital first strategy

3.3 Methodology adopted to date:

- Jointly undertaken by Wolverhampton Homes / City of Wolverhampton Council
- Series of meetings with managers
- Shadowing / back to floor visits
- Inclusive workshops of involved officers
- Briefings with Chief Executive, Head of Housing, WH Senior Management Team
- Briefings of managers and officers throughout service
- Vibrant and Sustainable City Panel to enable elected members to review/challenge

3.4 Emerging proposals for further development:

- Opportunity for greater efficiencies and collaboration have been identified
- Efficiency gains and significant financial savings can be realised
- Providing a clear distinction and separation of strategic and operational functions
- Operational activity being managed by Wolverhampton Homes and any strategic functions being managed by City of Wolverhampton Council
- Co-located sections with generic officers providing cross tenure housing support
- Potential to disperse service across the city to improve customer service and accessibility

4.0 Financial implications

4.1 The full extent of any financial implications is still being developed. However the potential for significant savings from greater collaboration and eliminating duplication has been identified during the review.

4.2 The total cost of providing current levels of service across both organisations is c £2 million with contributions from housing revenue account (HRA), general fund and direct Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) grant.
[MF/08022016/B]

5.0 Legal implications

5.1 There is a statutory requirement for council to determine and subsequently discharge any homeless duty and this will not be compromised if Wolverhampton Homes takes on responsibility for operational management of homeless services. Indeed 15 arm's length management organisations (ALMO) currently undertake this function on behalf of their council.

- 5.2 Any significant changes will require amendments to the management agreement and between the Council and Wolverhampton Homes.
[Legal Code: TS/05022016/N]

6.0 Equalities implications

- 6.1 A full equality impact assessment will be required both in terms of impact on customers and employees.

7.0 Environmental implications

- 7.1 There are no environmental implications associated with the proposals.

8.0 Human resources implications

- 8.1 These are likely to be significant both in terms of numbers of employees affected by any changes and different management reporting lines. Any proposal to co-locate colleagues currently employed by two different organisations operating with different terms and conditions and in some cases large differentials in salary grades will be challenging. This will be similar situation, albeit on a larger scale, to the situation faced when the Anti-Social Behaviour service was recently collocated and transferred to Wolverhampton Homes.

- 8.2 In addition there may be Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations (TUPE) issues to consider and subsequently accommodate in implementing any changes that may occur in the future.

9.0 Corporate landlord implications

- 9.1 There are no identifiable implications at this stage but as proposals are developed further with stakeholders, there may be a relocation of staff currently based in civic centre to alternative offices across the City.