

**REPORT TO EXECUTIVE****PORTFOLIO AREA: ENVIRONMENT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND
TRANSPORT**

Date of Meeting: 29/3/04

Public

Key Decision: No**Recorded in Forward Plan:** Yes

Inside Policy Framework

Title: HOSTEL ACCOMMODATION
Report of: Head of Environmental Protection
Report reference: EPS.13/2004

Summary:

To update Members in regard to staffing proposals following the completion of the review of Hostel accommodation. The review, which has been approved by Staffing Forum will bring the service into line with the requirements of the Supporting People funding regime and the Council's Housing role post transfer of the stock to Carlisle Housing Association.

Recommendations:

That the report is noted.

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1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 1.1 The Council transferred its Housing stock to Carlisle Housing Association on 9/12/02. It retained the Hostels and Homeshare accommodation as a core part of the remaining housing service to enable the discharge of its statutory responsibility to Homeless people.
- 1.2 Under the Housing Act 1996 and the Homelessness Act 2002 the Authority has a duty to secure temporary accommodation while investigating applications to people who present as homeless and a power to secure temporary accommodation for those whom are deemed to be 'non priority'. The Authority does not use Bed & Breakfast accommodation that fulfils a major government target for reducing its usage nationally.
- 1.3 An initial report (EPS.21/03) was taken to Executive on 03/4/03 informing Members about the changes under the Supporting People funding regime. The report outlined that a review of the Hostels and Homeshare service would be needed in order to identify the changes to bring the service in line with the requirements of the Supporting People contract. Approval was given (EX.067/03) for the review to be carried out by the Head of Environmental protection and that future reports be submitted to the Executive. Following a request from Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee (COS.47/03) on 5/6/03 to have input into the review process a verbal report was given to the Committee on 17/7/03 by the Head of Environmental Protection (COS.68/03).
- 1.4 A further report (EPS.49/03) was taken to Executive on 4/8/03 which set out the background to the planned review together with the timescales for completion and implementation. The report was noted (EX.167/03) and forwarded to Community Overview and Scrutiny for consideration at their meeting on 28/8/03 (COS.86/03).

2. HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY

- 2.1 The Homelessness Act 2002 placed a duty on all local authorities to conduct a Review into Homelessness, issues surrounding the causes of Homelessness and the provision of services for Homeless people within their area. Following the Review a Homelessness Strategy would have to be drawn up and in place by the 31/7/03. The Strategy highlights key areas identified through the Homelessness Review process which could be problems causing homelessness or issues for service development. The Carlisle City Council Homelessness Strategy was approved by Executive on 7/7/03 (EX.141/03) and Council on 9/9/03 (C.141/03) and

incorporates an Action Plan with identified targets for implementation. This Action Plan also forms part of the County Homelessness Strategy with some of the actions being common across the County in addition to the specific local targets set.

- 2.2 Objective six of the Action Plan within the Homelessness Strategy identifies the need to ' provide sufficient accommodation and support of an appropriate type for people who are, or who may become homeless including new client groups (as required under the Homelessness Act 2002)'. The actions identified to implement this objective are as follows;

- Re-organise existing accommodation to meet the needs of client groups
- Review of Hostels service in light of staffing arrangements, funding of repairs, etc

3. INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT

- 3.1 An Audit of Supporting People was carried out by Internal Audit between July and September 2003 as part of the agreed Audit Plan for 2003 / 04. The review looked at the changes that the Supporting People regime has introduced together with the current and future impact upon the Councils Housing Services (Homelessness Strategy, Homelessness operational functions and Homelessness Hostels and Homeshares). The overall conclusion of the Audit Review stated;

'Responsibility for the Supporting People function was passed over to the Housing Services and Health Partnerships section when the Housing Department transferred to Carlisle Housing Association in December 2002. It is a new area for this section and now is the ideal opportunity to reorganise this function using a new outlook'.

- 3.2 As well as looking at the changeover of funding for support costs from Housing Benefit to Supporting People the Audit review looked at the Council's current Hostels and Homeshare service. This included evaluating current resources available, identifying weaknesses within the service and recommending improvements that can be made.
- 3.3 It was identified that the discrepancies between grades and hours worked within the service together with out of date Job Descriptions were current and potential future problems. The report recommended that these areas are addressed and agreed with the relevant parties as soon as possible.

- 3.3 The staffing structure was looked at and a recommendation made that 'consideration should be given to reorganising the section taking Audit recommendations into account'. The proposed changes recommended within the report to the staffing structure together with the existing structure are shown in Appendix 1. In recommending that the post of Deputy Hostel Manager be created the report saw the management presence throughout an expanding service necessary for dealing with problems arising on split sites over a varied shift pattern. In recognising the developing work within the service it has also been recommended within the report that the Hostel Managers post is re-graded.

4. PROPOSALS

- 4.1 The review of Hostels and Homeshare accommodation started in September 2003 with the proposals being informed by both the Homelessness Strategy as well as the Internal Audit Report and developed with input from staff, management, personnel and the Unions. The proposals were taken to Staffing Forum on 17/2/04 and following approval were referred to the Executive meeting dated 29/3/04.

- 4.2 The proposals are described as follows;

* An updated, unified Job Description for all Hostel / Resettlement Workers – Currently the Hostel workers within the service are working to different Job Descriptions. The Internal Audit report noted that 'the majority of Job Descriptions were severely out of date'. As such, a Job Description has been developed in consultation with staff which would apply to all Hostel / Resettlement Worker posts across the service.

* All Hostel / Resettlement Workers to be on the same salary scale – Currently Hostel workers based at the John Street Hostel are graded scale 4 whereas the Hostel Workers based at the London Road hostel are graded scale 3. The Internal Audit Report identified that upon inspection 'it became apparent that there are no distinctions between each of the roles to justify the different grades'. As it is proposed that there is one Job Description covering the work that Hostel / resettlement Workers do it is also proposed that all posts be graded at the same level.

* All Hostel / Resettlement Workers to have the same Job Title – Currently there are different Job Titles that mirror the different Job Descriptions that staff have. As it is

proposed that a single Job Description and a single grade will apply to Hostel / Resettlement Workers, it is also proposed that a single Job Title would be applicable to these posts.

* All Hostel / Resettlement Workers to be on the same hours – Currently there are two members of staff who are contracted to work 39 hours a week whereas all other staff work a 37 hour week. Through discussion with personnel and negotiation with the individuals concerned agreement has been made to unify the working week to 37 hours for all staff.

* An updated Job Description for the Hostel Services Manager post – Currently this post has a Job Description which is 15 –20 years old and is out of date, this is attached at Appendix Five. The Internal Audit Report recommended that all Job Descriptions are updated to reflect current circumstances. As such, in negotiation with the postholder a new Job Description has been developed.

* Re-grading the Hostel Services Manager post – Currently this post graded at scale 6/SO1. The Internal Audit Report has proposed that this post is regraded at scale SO1 / SO2 (see staffing structure at Appendix 1) to reflect the increased responsibility for the management, support and resettlement of clients who use the service.

* Create a new post of Deputy Hostel Services Manager – Currently this post does not exist and the Hostel Manager covers the management of the whole service. Historically there were two managers based within the service (one at John Street Hostel and one at London Road Hostel) though when one left the other post covered the both Hostels and the Homeshares. The Internal Audit report has proposed that the post of Deputy Hostel Services Manager be created as identified within the proposed staffing structure at Appendix 1. A Job Description for the post has been drawn up in consultation with the Hostel Manager.

- 4.3 It is anticipated that the successful implementation of these proposals will enable the hostel service to both deal with referrals but also perhaps more importantly secure the resettlement of homeless people into the community. Whilst these proposals will allow the council to more effectively manage temporary accommodation and resettlement, much work remains to be done to address the root causes of homelessness. This could successfully build on the interventions already developed by the homelessness team such as the work of the recently appointed Youth Homelessness Officer, the rent deposit scheme and the partnership with Health and other agencies.

5. CONSULTATION

- 5.1 Consultation was held with all Staff, Personnel and Trade Unions in regard to the proposals. Starting in September 2003 the Hostel Manager through his weekly meetings with staff introduced elements of the review and staff were asked to work together with the manager in drawing up the initial draft of the Hostel / resettlement Workers Job Description which is attached at Appendix One. An initial meeting was held between the Housing Manager, the Hostel Manager and the Union on 24/9/03 to discuss the proposals (with personnel being kept informed of the meeting).
- 5.2 Further to the initial meetings identified in 5.1 a meeting was held with all staff on 18/11/03 to which personnel and the Union were invited. The meeting introduced the proposals, opened discussions with staff concerning potential changes and minutes were taken. Management, personnel and the union were updated following this meeting at which agreement had been made with the staff on some of the issues. Another meeting was arranged for the 4/12/03 to discuss specific concerns that the 5 staff members based at the London Road Hostel had. Personnel and the Union were present, minutes were taken and agreement was made with the staff on a number of issues.
- 5.3 Discussions were held with personnel and the individual staff members in reaching agreement regarding the proposed 37-hour week for all staff. Discussions were held with the Hostel Manager regarding the Managers and Deputy Managers Job Descriptions and with personnel on the regrading of the Hostel manager's post.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 That the report be noted.

7. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 To enable the service to be brought into line with the requirements of Supporting people, the recommendations of the Internal Audit report, the Council's Homelessness Strategy and the Council's Housing role post transfer of the stock to Carlisle Housing Association.

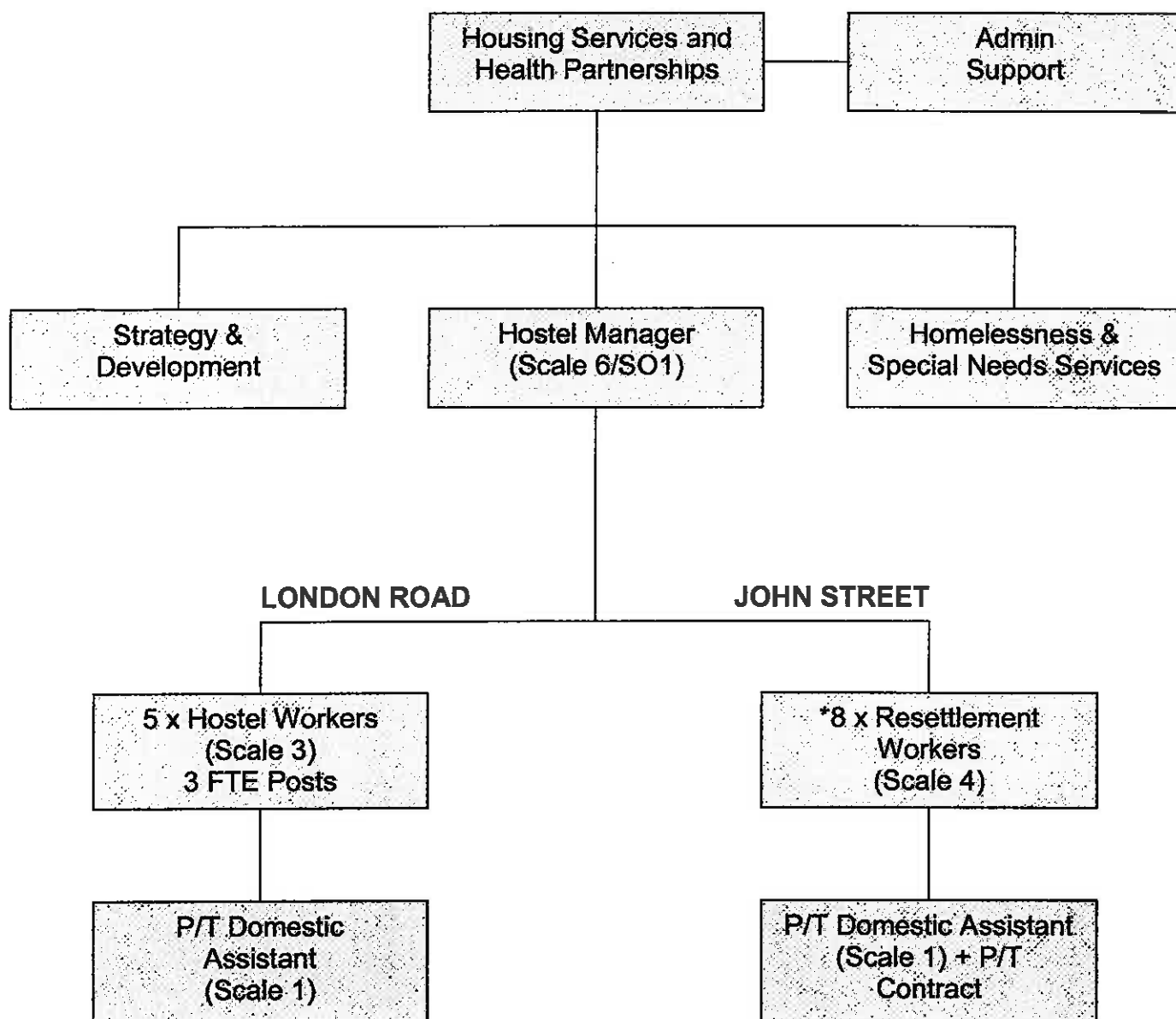
8. IMPLICATIONS

- Staffing/Resources – Proposed Staffing Structure shown at Appendix One.

- Financial – It will be cost neutral.
- Legal – None
- Corporate – None
- Risk Management – The client group dealt with by the service can often be high risk within the Hostels and Homeshares environment. This has been identified within the service risk assessment and is kept under constant monitoring.
- Equality Issues – The proposals unify a number of anomalies within the current set-up.
- Environmental – None
- Crime and Disorder – The client group dealt with by the service often have issues relating to Crime and Disorder.
- Impact on Customers – The proposals will strengthen the service delivered to customers and enable a vulnerable client group to be supported.

Appendix 1

Existing Structure



* Seconded post returned – currently vacant

Proposed Structure

