

Report of	Meeting	Date
Head of Housing Services (Introduced by the Executive Member for Housing and Neighbourhood Renewal)	Executive Cabinet	29 September 2005

HOUSING SERVICES RE-STRUCTURE

PURPOSE OF REPORT

- To seek members approval for a new strategic Housing Services Staffing Structure.

CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- The report meets corporate priorities of serving our customers better and investing in our capacity to deliver.

RISK ISSUES

- The issue raised and recommendations made in this report involve risk considerations in the following categories:

Strategy	✓	Information	
Reputation	✓	Regulatory/Legal	✓
Financial	✓	Operational	✓
People	✓	Other	

- The provision of a 'fit for purpose' Strategic Housing Service, is a requirement to meet Housing Stock Transfer and deliver CPA criteria.

BACKGROUND

- Members at their meeting on 7 April 2005 approved a report detailing proposals for consultation on a new Strategic Housing Service Structure.
- Members received a further report on 26 May summarising the consultative responses which contain some general concerns over the proposals. In response to this members approved an approach to take matters forward by approving to:
 - Proceed with the proposal to establish a new Home Improvement Agency jointly with South Ribble Borough Council and second two posts of Home Improvement Officer and Home and Area Improvement Officer to the Agency on existing grades.
 - Confirm the proposal to transfer the residual strategic housing function to the new Development Regeneration Unit and the transfer of the housing standards function to the Environmental Services Unit but subject to a review of the proposed staffing arrangements by Tribal HCH, the Council's recently appointed lead housing stock transfer consultants.

7. Tribal HCH have now submitted their report on the review of staffing arrangements contained at appendix 1 of the Report.

CONSULTANTS REPORT

8. The proposal from Tribal HCH recommends the inclusion of 2 additional service delivery posts, Strategic Manager, and Home Energy Efficiency Officer, together with 1 Admin Assistant support post. The inclusion of the 2 service delivery posts have been included to address issues of capacity and service quality raised following consultation and feedback. The options of including the Admin support post and Energy Efficiency Officer are discussed further in the report.
9. The proposed core structure proposed by Tribal (excluding options for Admin support and energy Efficiency Officer) provides the capacity to continue to deliver a Strategic Housing Service. This core structure is referred to at Addendum 1 of the covering report.
10. The consultant recommendations are set at paragraph 1.14.1 of their report and for ease and clarity are repeated below:
 1. The structure outlined in this report be adopted.
 2. A distinct stand alone strategic housing service is established within the new Development and Regeneration Unit.
 3. The changes are implemented at the earliest opportunity.
 4. The structure is reviewed in Autumn 2007 (or twelve months after transfer)
 5. Consideration is given to providing an additional EHO or technician to assist with Housing Standards
 6. Additional Administrative support for the Environmental Services Unit is reviewed
 7. Consideration is given whether to transfer the existing Administrative Assistant from Housing Renewal to the new Development and Regeneration Unit.
11. It is suggested to Members that 2, 3 and 4 be accepted. With regard to the other proposals options are available.
12. In considering the options covered by recommendations 1,5,6 and 7 Members are asked to consider the impact of the proposals on
 - (i) Cost/savings to the General Fund/HRA budget.
 - (ii) To consider whether to include the post of Home energy Efficiency Officer.
 - (iii) Whether the current level of service delivered as part of Housing Standard Service to be transferred to Environmental Services and undertaken by a Technical Assistant is a service priority for the Council.
 - (iv) Whether Members consider that administrative support to the environmental Services Unit and Development and Regeneration Unit are matters to be approved now or further considered at the 12 month review.

HOUSING STANDARDS SERVICE OPTIONS

13. Members' attention is drawn to paragraph 1.7.7 of the Consultant report regarding a proactive service to cater for the domestic drainage rubbish and low level nuisance complaints. If Members choose not to provide this service, but then the post of Technical Assistant can be deleted and only 1 EHO post transferred to Environmental Services. The post is only temporarily filled and thus no potential redundancy would ensue.

HOME ENERGY EFFICIENCY OFFICER OPTIONS

14. The Tribal HCH proposal includes a post of Home Energy Efficiency Officer. The inclusion of the post would allow for the provision of a proactive service to promote and develop measures to address fuel poverty and affordable warmth. It would be an enabling role with actual service delivery for grants etc through the Home Improvement Agency. The deletion of this post would still enable statutory functions to meet Home Energy Conservation Act requirements but little capacity to develop partnerships to access potential new funds or undertake promotion/publicity.
15. The structure for including this post is indicated at addendum 2 of this report.

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT OPTIONS

16. With regard to recommendation 7 of the Tribal report of their proposed structure which involves the transfer of the Admin Assistant currently in Housing Renewal to the Development and Regeneration Unit, Members are asked to consider information set out below.
17. With the introduction of the proposals for the Home Improvement Agency and the transfer of the Housing Standards Function to Environmental Services, some of the administrative support will subsequently not be required. There will however be a residual clerical administrative support function requirement and the addition of Housing Needs and Investment staff currently not being supported through administrative services is also likely to add administrative support needs. However, until the new structure is implemented no assessment of support needs can be undertaken and it is therefore an option for members to review the administrative support needs in 12 months time. If Members choose not to transfer this post to the new Development and Regeneration Unit, to avoid a potential redundancy situation this post will be transferred to Housing Revenue Account.
18. With regard to recommendation 6 of the Tribal Report, that administrative support to Environmental Services be reviewed it is an option for Members to consider this review now or the proposed review in Autumn 2007.

OPTION CHOICE

19. Members have a choice of options:
 1. Accept the structure proposed in the Tribal Report.
 2. Accept an amended structure as set out in the addendum 1 to my covering report which in essence involves the transfer of an administrative assistant post to the Housing Services unit. and/or
 3. Retain or delete the post of Technical Assistant as detailed at paragraph 11 of this report.

COMMENTS OF THE HEAD OF HUMAN RESOURCES

20. HR fully supports the secondment of staff to the Housing Improvement Agency.
21. With regard to the adoption of a Strategic Housing function in the event of either structure being implemented the staff members involved will be subject to ring fencing and selection, only where necessary, however members should be aware that this could potentially lead to compulsory redundancies.

22. Members need to consider whether the resources contained within either structure can deliver a service at a level that is acceptable to the organisation and this may have an effect on staff members who may require support in this area. Adoption of the Tribal proposal will have a negative effect on the budget challenge borne out of the loss of the Housing Revenue account and may have an impact on other service areas who potentially may have to assist in making the necessary savings.

COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

23. The original proposal resulted in a saving to the General Fund of £67k, with some costs being borne by the Housing Revenue Account. This situation resulted from both a change in the overall structure and also of having a stand-alone unit whereby recharges to and from the HRA are no longer required.

24. The financial effects of the options for consideration are as follows:

Option 1 - The Tribal proposal increases the number of staff by 2 over and above the original proposal. The cost of the additional staff would be £85k and as a result the costs to the General Fund would increase by the same amount. The proposal would therefore be more expensive to the General Fund than current budget.

Option 2 – The alternative structure as per Addendum 1, whereby the admin support is transferred to the HRA, and the Home Energy Efficiency Officer post and the remaining technical post are deleted, would result in a saving of £29k from the original proposal. The inclusion of the Home Energy Efficiency Officer post (Addendum 2) would result in an overall cost neutral effect on the General Fund.

Option 3 – The cost of retaining the technical post would be an additional £25k to each of the alternative structures contained in Option 2, therefore Addendum 1 would then have a net saving of £4k and Addendum 2 a net cost of £25k, in relation to the original proposal.

25. In all cases there will be an additional cost to the HRA of approx. £52k.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

26. (1) That the Tribal HCH report be noted.
(2) Members option choice is requested on the New Strategic Housing Service Structure.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

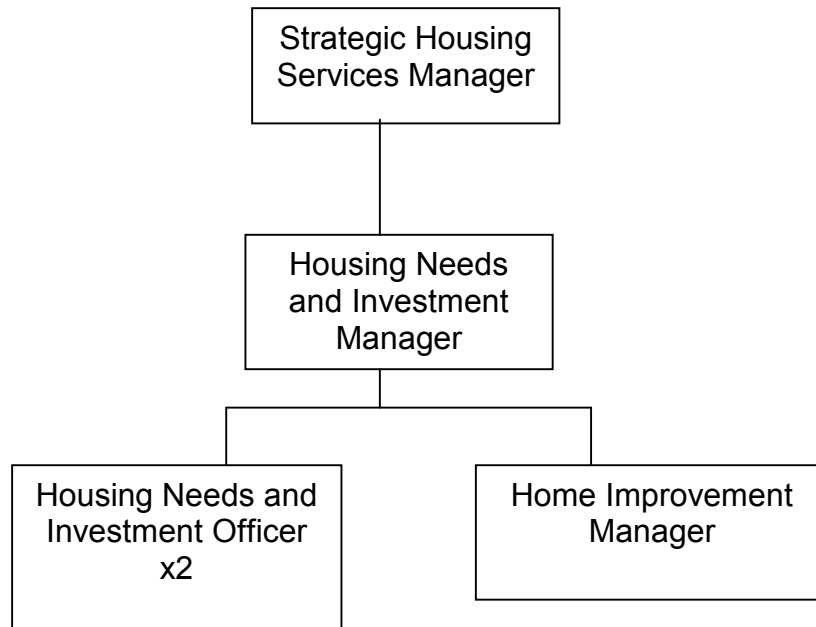
27. Options included as part of the report.

STEVE LOMAS
HEAD OF HOUSING SERVICES

Background Papers			
Document	Date	File	Place of Inspection
Report To Exec	7 April 2005 and 26 May 2005		Town Hall, Chorley

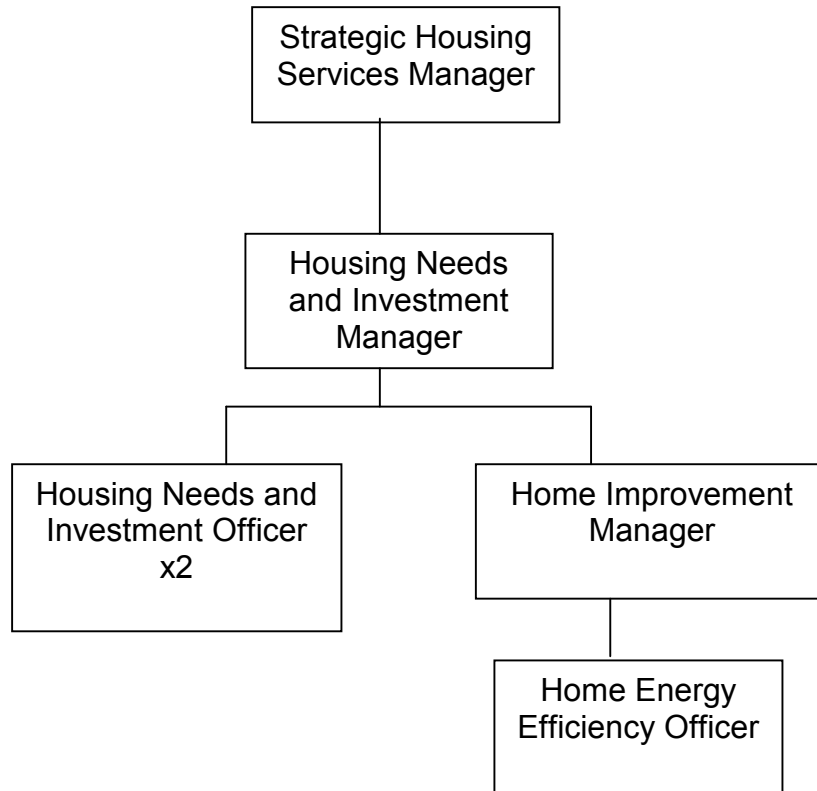
Report Author	Ext	Date	Doc ID
Steve Lomas	5577	22 September 2005	ADMINREP/REPORT

Alternate Strategic Housing Services Structure



NB The above structure excludes homelessness services or housing register management.

Alternate Strategic Housing Services Structure



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