

Report of	Meeting	Date
Head of Governance (Introduced by the Executive Member for Resources, Policy and Performance)	Executive Cabinet	20 March 2014

LEGAL SERVICES RESTRUCTURE

PURPOSE OF REPORT

- To inform and seek the authority of Members to restructure the Legal Services Team.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

- That the proposed structure, outlined at paragraph 18 be approved for consultation.
- That authority be delegated to the Executive Member to receive the consultation responses and subject to their being no opposition agree to the implementation of the new structure.
- That the proposed changes to solicitors implied terms and conditions of employment be agreed.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REPORT

- At present the Legal Services Team sit with the Governance service and individually report directly to the Head of Governance. The team consists of 2 senior solicitors and 2 senior paralegals.
- In late 2013 both the paralegals completed their training contracts and qualified as solicitors. They have however, continued to be employed as paralegals, albeit taking on a heavier workload.
- One of the senior solicitors has handed in their notice having obtained employment elsewhere. This, along with the qualification of the 2 paralegals has presented an opportunity to make the legal service more robust.
- The proposal at paragraph 18 provides a greater resilience to the team increasing the number of solicitors to 3. The provision of a team leader role with responsibilities for day to day staffing issues provides an immediate "in-room" management presence and support, as well as providing a more incrementally progressive structure. The need for this post arises as the Head of Service has taken on additional duties in relation to Market Walk and is unable to continue to provide the level of day to day management support as previous.
- The retention of a paralegal post provides an opportunity to further develop an employee as has been the case within the team previously.
- There will be an additional cost of the new structure of £283 which can be contained within existing budget.

Confidential report Please bold as appropriate	Yes	No
--	-----	----

Key Decision? Please bold as appropriate	Yes	No
--	-----	----

Reason Please bold as appropriate	1, a change in service provision that impacts upon	2, a contract worth £100,000 or more
---	--	--------------------------------------

1 x Legal Assistant

Scale 6 (subject to job evaluation)

19. It would be intended to ring fence the Senior Solicitor for the Legal Services Team Leader post. The additional duties would involve the day to day management of the team to include work allocation, undertaking 121's and appraisals. It would still be envisaged that the Head of Service would have an active management role in this team. Appointment to the post would require an interview process.
20. The paralegals would be ring fenced to the solicitor roles and would be interviewed for them.
21. It would be intended to recruit to any unfilled positions.

INFORMAL CONSULTATION

22. Affected staff (all of Legal Services including the member of staff leaving) were informally consulted and asked to express any views or opinions on the proposals. There was one response in support and one which raised queries about the operation of the changes but there were no views expressed in opposition to the changes.
23. The Union were consulted and indicated no opposition to the proposed changes.

ADDITIONAL CHANGES

24. Historically, although it has not formed part of their terms and conditions, the Council has paid for solicitors practicing certificates. This is at odds with other services within the Council and in order to bring Legal in line the positions offered in the proposed structure will not include the payment of the solicitors Practising Certificate.

COST TO THE ESTABLISHMENT

25. The increased cost of this structure can be met by the savings on the budget in relation to practising certificates and internalising the spend on external advice for employment matters.

IMPLICATIONS OF REPORT

26. This report has implications in the following areas and the relevant Directors' comments are included:

Finance	X	Customer Services	
Human Resources	X	Equality and Diversity	
Legal	X	Integrated Impact Assessment required?	
No significant implications in this area		Policy and Communications	

COMMENTS OF THE STATUTORY FINANCE OFFICER

27. The increased costs to the establishment arising from the proposed changes to the Legal Services Team outlined in this report can be accommodated within the existing budget resources.

COMMENTS OF THE MONITORING OFFICER

28. The proposed structure will ensure that the legal service continues to meet the need of the Council.

COMMENTS OF THE HEAD OF HUMAN RESOURCES AND OD

29. Subject to approval to consult with staff on the proposals, Human Resources will inform and support all employees on the implications of the report. The council's agreed restructure

policy will be followed and should any staff be at risk of redundancy all appropriate support will be provided. The two officers whose posts are being deleted will be ring-fenced for the two solicitor posts which are being created and recruitment to the posts will be through competency based interviews. The Trade Union will be fully consulted and provided opportunity to make comments on the proposals and support their members throughout the period of consultation and change. Whilst there is a slight increase to the overall staffing costs, it is recognised that the proposals ensure that the legal team is able to effectively carry out its functions and meet the demands placed upon it.

Chris Moister
Head of Governance

There are no background papers to this report.

Report Author	Ext	Date	Doc ID
Chris Moister	5160	6 March 2014	