

SUBJECT:	Staffing – Housing Options Team
MEETING:	Individual Cabinet Member Decision – Councillor P Murphy
DATE:	10th April 2019
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED:	All

1.0 PURPOSE

1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval to amend the staffing structure for the Housing Options Team and to create three temporary new posts through the availability of Welsh Government Homeless Prevention Grant for 2019/20.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 To agree and adopt the amended staffing structure and the creation of three new temporary posts, to be implemented from 1st April 2019. **See Appendix 1.**

3. KEY ISSUES

3.1 The Welsh Government has made a Homeless Prevention Grant available for 2019/20. This grant is revenue funding with the intended outcome of increasing the prevention of homelessness. This report sets out a proposed amended staffing structure to seek to improve the ability to prevent homelessness. This will be addressed by:

- increasing the role and responsibilities of the existing Private Sector Liaison Officer to maximise the ability to secure properties to accommodate people at risk of homelessness or in housing need;
- creating an additional part-time admin support role to free up capacity of officers providing advice and support to those at risk of homelessness and
- the creation of a part-time project officer to progress and complete projects that have stalled due to lack of capacity.

3.2 The current part-time Housing Options Team Manager x 0.6 post is due to become vacant at the end of March 2019. It is considered there is a need to replace the post, but not on a like for like basis due to the current level of homeless demand that the Housing Option Team needs to deal with and the associated complexities. In addition, the team has numerous inter-related functions, such as preventing homelessness; responding to homelessness; providing temporary accommodation; Monmouthshire Lettings Service; managing and maintaining accommodation and responsibility for the Housing Register. Many of these are statutory functions. The Housing Options Team is the largest team within Housing & Communities with 11.2 wte.

3.2 Approval, therefore, is sought to create a full-time Housing Options Team Manager post to maximise management continuity, strengthen decision-making and critically, provide the required support to individual members of the team who often need to deal with challenging and multiple homeless cases. This would be funded from the core budget.

3.3 In addition, the Council has been allocated Homeless Prevention Grant for 19/20, which the Council can use to support key Welsh Government themes which contribute towards improving overall homeless prevention outcomes. These themes are:

- *Investment in services to improve access to the private rented sector;*
- *Application of trauma informed practice and psychologically informed environments (PIE)*
- Strengthening services to people with mental health and/or substance misuse problems,
- *Action to implement the Positive Pathway to prevent youth homelessness and the Care Leavers Accommodation and Support Framework;*
- Improving implementation of the National Pathway for Homelessness Services to Children, Young People and Adults in the Secure Estate (prisoner pathway);
- *Services to reduce rough sleeping*
- *Improving services to people not in priority need.*

3.4 It is proposed that the following temporary posts be created to support the themes highlighted in italics above in 3.3:

- Establish a Monmouthshire Lettings Negotiator to create a more dedicated resource for engaging more proactively with potential and existing landlords to take forward the Monmouthshire Letting Service. This supports the private sector theme. It is proposed that this post is ring-fenced to the current Private Sector Liaison Officer post-holder due to over 80% of the duties being the same, as per Council policy. There is a need for the current post-holder to be released from day to day housing management activity.
- Establish a part-time Homeless Prevent Projects Officer (0.5 wte) to undertake specific policy and procedure work that supports the themes in italics
- Establish a part-time temporary Administrative Assistant (0.4 wte) who will provide support to the team as a whole and help individual staff to dedicate more time towards prevention activity and reduce the impact of associated administration.

3.5 In addition it is proposed that an existing temporary Accommodation Assistant continues to be funded through the Grant.

3.6 All of the above posts will be temporary and fixed term for one year.

3.5 **Appendix 1** provides an overview of the proposed changes.

4. **OPTIONS APPRAISAL**

4.1 The following options are available:

- **Option 1** – Continue with the status quo and replace the current part time Housing Options Manager post like for like.
- **Option 2** – To effectively delete the current post and absorb the current Housing Options Team management responsibility through the remaining Housing & Communities Management structure.
- **Option 3** – Adopt the proposal to increase the hours of the current part time Housing Options Manager post and replace with a full-time post.

5. OPTIONS EVALUATION

5.1 Homelessness and preventing homelessness are statutory duties for the Council.

5.2 Additional evaluation over and above that listed above is detailed in **Appendix 2**.

4. REASONS:

4.1 The Council has a legal duty under the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 to prevent homelessness. The Council is being requested by Welsh Government to support the priority themes listed in paragraph 3.3.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

5.1 This proposal does create resource implications. The proposal to extend the part-time Housing Options Team Manager to full-time will cost an additional £23,119. The opportunity has arisen particularly in relation to the transfer of the Private Leasing Scheme (PLS) back to the Council from Melin last year. The PLS budget created, in hindsight, was overstated due to there being a level of uncertainty about costs (eg repairs, void loss etc) and the number of properties (which is lower than expected). The risk associated with the transfer of the PLS needed to be previously reflected in the Medium Term Financial Plan. Having operated the Scheme for nearly a year, there is a better understanding of costs and more certainty about anticipated expenditure and facilitated there being no further need to reflect in the Medium Term Financial Plan. The improved budget position, therefore, supports the proposed additional staffing expenditure (which is needed to due to the increased level of activity) to be absorbed by the Housing Options Team wider budget.

5.2 The cost of the temporary staffing proposals (total £66,093) will be cost neutral due to the availability of a 1 year Welsh Government Homeless Prevention Grant of £72,919.

6. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS:

6.1 There are no negative implications. **See Appendix 3**.

7. SAFEGUARDING & CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS:

7.1 The policy supports both safeguarding and corporate parenting through strengthening homeless prevention and increasing accommodation options.

8. **CONSULTEES:** Cabinet; Senior Leadership Team; Head of Planning, Housing & Place-Shaping; Assistant Head of Finance; Senior Occupational Health Practitioners; Monmouthshire CAIR; Adults Select Committee

9. **BACKGROUND PAPERS:** None

10. **AUTHOR:** Ian Bakewell, Housing & Communities Manager

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Appendix 2

Evaluation Criteria – Cabinet, Individual Cabinet Member Decisions & Council

Title of Report:	Staffing – Housing Options Team
Date decision was made:	13.03.19
Report Author:	Ian Bakewell, Housing & Communities Manager

What will happen as a result of this decision being approved by Cabinet or Council?

The current part-time Housing Options Manager 0.6 will become a full-time post, to meet the needs and demands of the service and the staffing.

In addition using Welsh Government homeless prevention grant funding, the following new temporary posts are proposed:

- Monmouthshire Lettings Negotiator. As per policy, current Private Sector Liaison Officer post-holder to be slotted into post.
- Homeless Prevention Officer x 0.5
- Administrative Assistant x 0.4

The Grant will also be used to continue funding an existing temporary Accommodation Assistant.

12 month appraisal

What benchmarks and/or criteria will you use to determine whether the decision has been successfully implemented?

The following benchmarks will be used to assess whether the decision has had a positive or negative effect:

- % of homelessness prevented.
- % of homelessness relieved
- No. of Monmouthshire Lettings properties
- Completion of specific projects eg Positive Pathways

12 month appraisal

What is the estimate cost of implementing this decision or, if the decision is designed to save money, what is the proposed saving that the decision will achieve?

It is not anticipated that there will be any direct or indirect budget savings through implementing this decision, although it is an on-going priority to avoid the need to utilise B & B by increasing accommodation options, as per the aim of Monmouthshire Lettings.

The cost of creating a full time Housing Options Team Manager will be £23,119.

The Council has been allocated £72,919 Homeless Prevention Grant for 2019/20. The grant funded expenditure, including on-costs will be:

- Monmouthshire Lettings Negotiator – £4,490 (to be ring fenced to current Private Sector Liaison Officer)
- Homeless Prevention Project Officer x 0.5 – £22,578
- Administrative Assistant x 0.4 - £11,150
- Continuing to fund temporary Accommodation Assistant - £27,875

It is proposed that the balance of £6,826 is invested in ‘trauma informed practice and psychologically informed environments’ training and landlord incentives to support Monmouthshire Lettings.

12 month appraisal

Any other comments



