

SUBJECT: Restructure of Welfare Rights
DIRECTORATE: Social Care, Safeguarding and Health
MEETING: Individual Cabinet Member Decision
DATE: 24th May 2017
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: Countywide

1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 As part of the 2017/18 budget mandate agreed savings a review of the Welfare Rights function was conducted.
- 1.2 The review looked at the level of Welfare Rights available and if an alternative approach can be developed.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 To endorse the redefined Job Descriptions of the current posts.
- 2.2 Approve the new grade F salary scale for the new posts.
- 2.3 The existing Benefits Advisor posts to be deleted and replaced by the new Financial Inclusion posts.

3. BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES:

- 3.1 The current Benefits/Welfare Rights function within Social Care, Safeguarding and Health has 1 FTE made up by 0.5 FTE Senior Benefits Advisor Grade G and 0.5 FTE Benefits Officer Grade E.
- 3.2 Within Housing there is a financial inclusion function, the purpose of which is to support the statutory homeless prevention function. Part of the job role includes Welfare Rights.
- 3.3 There are various points of referral and delivery for Welfare Rights and some duplicate efforts in terms of more than one contact with clients.

4. REASONS:

- 4.1 As part of the 2017/18 budget process, all managers were requested to submit budget mandate savings. As part of the Finance and Benefits team budget mandate within Social Care, Safeguarding and Health, a proposal was put forward to review the Benefits/Welfare Rights function that sits within the team.
- 4.2 The review highlighted Welfare Rights was available via numerous sources, of which some are either provided directly internally or funded by the Council.
- 4.3 One area of duplication of internal Welfare Rights is with the Housing team via the role of the Financial Inclusion Officer. The proposal will increase flexibility and enhance resilience at a time when the impact of Welfare Reforms is expected to increasingly impact on local households. In addition, the proposal has the advantage of the function sitting alongside the Housing Support Gateway. The Gateway regularly receive referrals from clients experiencing issues relating to financial hardship. As such the review moved from that of budget savings to one of balancing savings with provision of a more cohesive single point of Welfare Rights delivery. In addition, to future proof the service instead of transferring the Welfare Rights function from Social Care, Safeguarding and Health on the revisited budget savings staff grades, we are proposing to transfer into additional Financial Inclusion Officer posts to realign and future proof the services, provided as a single delivery via the Housing team.
- 4.4 This alternative model will allow for streamlining of the current supervisory/management roles within the Social Care Finance team.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 5.1 Small saving in line with mandate proposals of £1,794 per annum, being the difference in combined cost between existing posts of £32,852 and the new posts of £31,058. However this saving will not materialise until after the two year salary protection of the current Senior Benefits Advisor.
- 5.2 The Finance and Benefits Advice Team has a total savings mandate target which resulted in a 2017/18 budget reduction of £29,000. This proposal is a small contribution towards the saving, with a further £14,000 already achieved. The remaining £13,000 is subject to further re-engineering.

6. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS:

As the nature of the roles in question in essence remain the same, there are no equality implications.

7. CONSULTEES:

HR

Trade Unions

Employees

SCH Workforce Group

Housing & Regeneration Manager

Following consultation the following issues were raised: -

- Proposed Job Description – How the interaction with Social Care and the Finance team will be maintained. Additionally the need to retain the Welfare Rights element specific to Social Care. The Housing and Communities Manager will monitor this once transfer has occurred.
- Reassure the existing finance team that the new proposal will not jeopardise the working arrangements currently in place – The Finance Manager will set up a team meeting to discuss how this proposal will work
- Integration with the new Housing team – Solution to set up interim meetings leading up to transfer
- Date for transfer – Set a target date of 8th July but this will remain under review as we move through the transition stage.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

New Financial Inclusion Officer job description which has been evaluated.

9. AUTHOR:

Tyrone Stokes, Finance Manager Social Care, Safeguarding and Health

10. CONTACT DETAILS:

Tel: 01633 644589

E-mail: tyronestokes@monmouthshire.gov.uk