

Commercial and Integrated Landlord Services Restructure

Estates

The re-structure will formalise the division of the Estates Service into two distinct professional teams as well as retaining our service responsibilities for cemeteries, energy and markets. It is proposed that the professional property aspect is divided into estate management and development teams. A new Managers post will oversee the Estates Management team and the team will undertake the management of our operational, legacy, county farms and investment portfolios. They will also lead on the annual asset valuations process and asset management activities. It is intended that as the team builds in capacity and expertise then the need for external management agents managing our investment portfolio will reduce or be eliminated. We will still need external professional advice when undertaking acquisitions to provide independent advice and market knowledge

The development team has been in operation for approximately 18 months and have developed a strong track record in the sale of existing sites such as Rockfield Farm and Crick Road. They are however pulled in to supplement the estate management team, as they do not have an independent management structure. In the current proposals a new Development Manager post has been created that will be responsible for transitioning the team away from traditional sales and moving towards JV's and hopefully a new development company. The rest of the team structure remains as existing, but this may need reflection in due course dependent on the decision to move into the development company and capacity requirements.

The team has had a vacant asset officer's post for in excess of 12 months and despite a number of external adverts and discussions with recruitment companies, we have been unable to fill it. The re-structure re-grades the surveyor's posts in an attempt to make them more financially attractive and whilst we still will not be competing at the same level as the private sector in terms of financial remuneration, I would hope that the recent acquisitions and the possible opportunities we can offer would be enough to fill the existing and new roles.

The Markets Service is currently under resourced and as such, this places significant pressure on a small front line team to work hours beyond those contracted and often late in the evenings, every weekend and bank holidays. The market practices are out dated and this has come to light recently due to sickness absences, traders meetings and the current refurbishment of the market hall. In order to maximise income generation and meet income targets the service needs to be modernised and additional capacity built in. It is therefore proposed to create a Deputy Markets Manager post and convert the current facilities assistant posts from 25-hour contracts to full time posts. This will offset overtime and casual worker costs, however it is unlikely these costs will be completely eliminated due to the extended opening hours of the Abergavenny Town Hall building.

It is also proposed to create an Energy Assistant post to support the Energy Manager in managing the council's utility providers, working with services to manage billing, water leaks, installation of smart meters and dealing with queries. In addition, if capacity allows they will support in the delivery of energy projects and delivering our carbon neutral agenda.

Property Services

It is evident that there is a lack of capacity within the existing teams, which has resulted in the need to contract out work to neighbouring authorities or the private sector. The schemes contracted out include the new police headquarters, elements of the Caldicot and Monmouth Comprehensive

builds as well as one off projects such as the design of J block. This has resulted in staff becoming demotivated due to lack of capacity, opportunities for progression, lack of succession planning and a continual reactive response rather than a planned delivery programme. The proposed re-structure seeks to develop additional capacity and expertise within the teams to enable them to manage the current and pipeline of both design and maintenance projects. The team however is required to fully recover all of their costs with an income target in excess of £1,200,000; this has resulted in the charging of fees to internal clients, which in turn acts as a barrier to Property Services being used. It is also true that due to lack of capacity, the customer care for internal clients has not always been to the level we would expect and this has also driven away custom. It is anticipated that this position will reverse as the capacity is increased and colleagues are fairly rewarded for the skills and expertise that they provide.

The Design team are the largest users of external providers as they lack a coherent planning process to manage workloads and capacity is limited. The existing Design Managers post is ineffective on the basis of a 3 day week and needs to be re-designated as a full time post to enable the management of projects and resources and ensure that decisions are not delayed whilst the Design Manager is not in the office. There is no deputy in the current or proposed structure so the re-designation of this post is essential. Additional capacity is proposed through the creation of an additional Quantity Surveyor and Architectural Technician posts. The Quantity Surveyors play a crucial role in cost management on all the schemes delivered and given the magnitude of these projects additional resource is essential as currently we are relying on third parties to enable us to continue to undertake this role. The Architectural Technician will be responsible for undertaking design work on small schemes as well as overseeing their implementation. Additional projects emanating from S106 schemes, additional grant funding for schools and Gwent Police's estates strategy will utilise this additional capacity. It is not anticipated that the Design team will be involved in the development company workload; however, this can be reviewed as the work programme for the proposed company develops. In order to respond to changes in health and safety legislation a Principle Designer role is required in order for us to undertake any construction works (of any scale). We are currently managing this through an agency appointment, but it will be an essential post within the new structure.

Currently the Maintenance Manager holds responsibility for the maintenance of the Council and Gwent Police's property portfolio. In common with the design team, the maintenance team are obliged to generate a fee income to offset their costs and therefore income is derived by top slicing the capital maintenance programme, a fee charge of 15% to service departments for maintenance works, as well as an SLA with Schools and a fee charge of 7%. Once again, this is a barrier for non-corporate works as services seek to reduce costs by commissioning the work externally. This has led to additional costs for the authority when the works undertaken do not meet regulatory or health and safety standards and the Maintenance teams are then required to intervene and incur additional expenditure. The charge is therefore counter intuitive as it drives potentially poor practices and additional costs. The proposed re-structure retains the existing team and supplements capacity through the creation of an additional electrical clerk of works post – an area where we are continually struggling to meet demand. Given the role out of EV chargers and the de-carbonisation, agenda demand for both our electrical and mechanical officers will be increasing and we are already operating beyond capacity.

Health and Safety is a team that has been consistently below capacity for a number of years following the departure of both a monitoring officer and the Manager. This has meant a decrease in our ability to undertake effective monitoring and the commissioning of health & safety surveys and

remediation works. Recent legislation has also necessitated a change in how construction projects are managed and the requirement for a Principle Designer as discussed above. It is intended that the health and safety team will now report directly to the Maintenance and Facilities Manager and will result in the creation of a new Health & Safety Lead Officer post who will hold responsibility for the commissioning of surveys, undertaking remediation works, identifying poor practice within our buildings and ensuring our undertakings are compliant with legislation.

The proposed structure changes the reporting responsibilities for facilities management and builds in capacity at our Magor site. It is intended that the cost of this officer will be recovered through commercial lettings, however there will be a time lag until the building becomes fully available and let. A Facilities Assistant position has been built in capacity to cover holidays, sickness etc. at both sites and manage the increased usage on the County Hall site.

Business Support will undergo a significant change in the current proposals. The service is responsible for the provision of reception, courier, mail, stationary, mobile telephones, photocopiers, property services accounts, timesheet administration, recharges etc. It is proposed that the hierarchy will be streamlined and the teams split into customer services and accounts & contract management. The Business Manager and Office Services Manager posts are to be deleted and replaced with a Finance & Contracts Manager who will be responsible for the service, supporting this post will be a Contracts Officer and Customer Services Team Leader. The purpose of this is to delineate clear responsibilities and improve existing performance around the management of large corporate contracts such as mobile telephony and photocopiers.