

# Taunton Deane Borough Council

**Executive – 9 February 2012**

## **Housing Services and Community Development - Restructure Proposals**

### **Report of the Community Services Manager.**

(This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Adkins)

#### **1. Executive Summary**

This report brings forward proposals for changes to the staffing structure of Housing Services to prepare the service for issues arising from Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Self Financing and the associated new 30 year business plan. It seeks to prepare the service for challenges in relation to tenure reform, increased financial responsibility and enhanced expenditure on our assets and to deliver improving high quality and highly performing services. The report also makes changes to the current Community Development Team.

#### **2. Background**

Since the creation of the Community Services Theme and recommendations from the Audit Commission, the Council's housing service has been underway with a modernisation programme. The service is now more outward looking, performance focussed and working to place tenants at the heart of scrutiny and decision making. We have been working to understand and improve key transactional activities in the service in relation to repairs, voids, and income management.

We have been making steady progress: the Tenants Services Management Board has recently celebrated a first successful year in operation; a recent tenants survey produced our best ever results with top quartile performance for overall satisfaction and repairs; our performance on current tenant rent arrears is very good; our new officers with a specific focus on Anti-Social Behaviour are beginning to have a real impact and our voids performance is improving. But we have more to do.

Our preparations for self financing are going well with a robust project team and plan in place, we have recently completed stage 1 of this process by bringing a report forward to members for consideration and completing a new draft 30 year business plan. The business plan has been created following consultation with tenants, elected members, staff and stakeholders and brings forward new strategic objectives and a high level action plan for the service. We await final debt settlement figures later this year to allow a final business plan to be agreed.

The move to Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Self Financing in April 2012, will involve the Council taking on approximately £85 million of national housing debt, based on initial settlement figures. Whilst modelling suggests self financing will generally be a good deal for Taunton Deane, it places a significant responsibility on the HRA to ensure that governance, performance management and financial management arrangements are as good as they can be. In addition, projections for the repairs and maintenance work required on our housing stock indicate the need for a significant lift in capital expenditure. The service will have to gear up for this increase to ensure additional work is procured and managed effectively. Lastly changes to housing policy and potentially legislation particularly around tenure reform will place new and different requirements on the service in future years. Essentially self financing is moving the housing landlord service to be more like a business such as a housing association in its outlook, systems and operation.

### **3. Structural Proposals.**

The proposals outlined below for the housing service seek to position our structure in a way that supports the new business plan and future investment needs of the service. They also formalise some changes already implemented on a trial basis in relation to how we manage our void properties.

Specifically these proposals seek to achieve the following:-

- A clearer focus in the service on managing our resources by the creation of an income team.
- Preparation for the need for us to deliver an increased capital work programme in our stock.
- Capacity to more effectively manage our stock condition database.
- Making permanent our successful pilot of changes to improve voids performance.
- Enhancing the HRA's support for Community Development activities and integrating this work in the service.
- Position us to respond effectively to the proposed new regulatory framework for social housing.

Detailed structure charts for the existing and proposed structures are set out in Appendices 1 and 2 respectively. NB Existing structures for the Supported Housing and Tenant Empowerment teams are unaffected by these proposals.

#### **Estates and Lettings teams:**

There are currently two Housing Estates Managers each managing separate teams who essentially undertake the same work in different geographical areas. In relation to the management of our voids process we are currently piloting some staff changes that essentially means that only two teams are involved in the voids process as opposed to three previously. This pilot involves moving two Rents Recovery and Voids Officer posts and one Assistant post into the Estates team under one manager, and these officers will also now undertake new tenant verification work instead of the Estates Officers. This has put the management and ownership of the voids process under one manager and facilitates quicker and better communication between officers to speed up the lettings process, and

frees up Estates Officers to focus on rent arrears work and general tenancy issues.

The proposals put forward are to continue with the principles of close working between estates and voids staff, but to organise these activities in two smaller new teams. This will be achieved by re aligning the two current Estates Manager posts into positions that are responsible for these teams.

In the Estates team, the current establishment of eight generic Estates Officers will be maintained along with three of the current Estates Assistants posts.

In the Lettings team two new Estates Officer posts will be created but with a specific focus on lettings activities. This team will also be supported by two Lettings Assistant posts. In order to achieve this, resource has been pulled through from the current Rents Recovery and Voids Team, which will no longer exist in the proposed structure.

The team will also be complimented by the transfer of the current Temporary Accommodation Officer post from the Housing Options team. Much of the temporary accommodation now used is HRA property and the HRA receives the income from these lettings, so it is proposed that the management of HRA temporary accommodation units will be transferred to the Lettings team. In this way the letting and management of these units can be brought into line with how other HRA property are managed, this post is already predominantly funded by the HRA.

Following consultation responses about the extent of how closely the Estates Officers who focus on Anti Social Behaviour work alongside the generic estates officers, it is now proposed to continue to locate these two officers in this part of the structure as opposed to moving them into the new Communities team. They will be part of the lettings team but will be available to continue to provide support to the generic estates officers.

### **Communities Team:**

The current Community Development Team is approximately 50% funded by the HRA. It is proposed that this team is transferred in totality into the Housing Service to create a new Communities Team. The team will be the focus for ongoing work in our deprived communities and estates but with a greater emphasis on tenants. This change will also see an uplift in HRA support to community development work by the funding of three community development officers and the team manager by 85% from the HRA. The residual General Funding of this function will enable the team manager to continue to be the council's lead on community safety matters and give the team some small scope to address non tenants and estates issues.

The outcome of this change is that HRA resources targeted at community development on our estates for the benefit of tenants will be consolidated in one team and will enable greater integration with the rest of the Housing Service.

The Community Development Team will transfer into Housing Services with no changes to its current structure, pending the outcome of a mini review of arrangements for managing and enabling the provision of 'community leisure' (play, sports, recreation, cultural activities etc) through parks, open spaces and public realm. These responsibilities are currently spread across a number of different individuals and services, including community development. The review – led by Strategic Director Brendan Cleere - will be completed in the early New Year and may result in changes to the Council's current approach. Any proposals for change affecting employees will be subject to consultation with UNISON and staff, before implementation.

### **Income Team:**

As described above changes arising from HRA Self Financing place significantly more financial responsibility and associated risks on the service and the authority. Consequently the maximisation of income and improved debt recovery will be a much more important business consideration for us in future years. This is because all surpluses or overspends in the HRA will have an impact on the period in which we are able to pay down the debt settlement. It should be noted that Housing Services is a £21 million business providing complex and varied services to tenants many of whom are the most vulnerable in our communities and a business that will have approximately £100million of debt to address.

It is therefore proposed to create a new Income Team that will have a clear focus on helping the service to manage its increased responsibilities. This move acknowledges and responds to the challenges brought about by self financing with greater focus on rent management.

The team will be formed mostly using resources in the current Rents Recovery and Voids team. It will be comprised of a Manager, an Income Officer, the current Debt and Benefit Advisor post, and supported by two Income Assistants posts. The Assistants post will provide support to both the Income Officer and the Leasehold and Right to buy officer as outlined below.

Lastly, a Leaseholder and Right to Buy Officer position will be included in this team to lead on this specialist area and work to develop a leaseholder group and an improved leaseholder service. Previous attempts to spread this work generically across a wider range of officers have not been successful due to the highly specialised and prescriptive nature of the work, so it is proposed to revert to a specialist post.

### **Property Services:**

Housing Property Services is the client team that manages the council's housing stock. The stock consists of over 6000 dwellings but also a mixture of shops, garages, meeting halls, land and sewerage treatment works. In addition to the council's tenanted stock the team manages the repair, maintenance and improvement of 75 leasehold properties on two separate sites in Taunton, and the external repair and re-decoration of approximately 350 other leasehold properties.

The draft business plan for the service projects a significantly increased capital programme for the service with a near doubling for the next few years. This change will create a significantly increased workload for this part of the service that we have to gear up for. Due to the dimensions of the service in terms of level of spend and the volume of works required to our 6000 properties, changes and projects need to be managed effectively and at the right level in the organisation. There is a constant stream of new issues to tackle and projects to manage for example Solar PV or Air Source Heat Pumps that are resource hungry to implement successfully.

We also know that we have a range of existing longstanding contracts to re-tender to allow us to prepare for the changing work programme in the coming years. The current re-tendering of the heating contract has involved a significant amount of work and we are challenging our potential new providers on cost, service quality and innovation more than we ever have before. But this in turn creates a challenge for us in that we have to also “raise our game” to effectively manage these contracts. As a result the proposals below add a new management position to give enhanced capacity at this level and additional technical and administrative capacity in the service.

In this context proposals are outlined below for a refreshed and enhanced Housing Property structure that will allow us to meet these future challenges. Initially the service has been divided into two broad areas; the first relates to maintenance and will be responsible for primarily revenue funded works that are mostly provided currently by the DLO. These works include response repairs, void management, programmed maintenance and heating maintenance. This team will be headed up by a Property Manager (Maintenance) and be comprised of the current posts of Gas Safety Officer, one Clerk of Works and three Building Surveyors.

The second part of the structure will relate to improvements and enhancements of our stock, works which are generally capital in nature and will be delivered primarily by external contractors. Such works will include kitchen, bathroom, roof, door replacement, heating installations and fire safety works to our communal areas in flats. The team will be headed by a Property Manager (Contracts) and be comprised of the current posts of Senior Assistant Quantity Surveyor, two Clerks of Works, and three Surveyors.

The service currently only has one administrative post, a post that is mostly targeted at administration associated with our heating contract. Consequently there is a constant presence of temporary staff undertaking data inputting and general administration. This approach is not cost effective or conducive to service continuity. It is therefore proposed to create two new Administrative Assistant posts, one will support the surveyors particularly in relation to the administration associated with the enhanced approach to void property management and the other will undertake general administration and data inputting for the service and provide support for the management team. These three posts, will be managed in the technical teams as opposed to Business Support. This will be a change for the current Administrative Assistant postholder who is currently managed via the Business support team.

The creation of the new 30 year business plan for housing required a high level of scrutiny of the data held by this part of the service particularly in relation to our asset management database. During this process concerns were raised by Savills the consultants who have worked with the Council to develop the new business plan, that the quality of our data was questionable. Consequently a validation exercise was undertaken that has revealed that we do have a number of areas concerning stock data and data management that we have to address. One issue that has come out of this process is that the Council does not have a dedicated resource to “look after” the Codeman asset management database system. Currently this work is primarily undertaken by one of the service managers and this is not an efficient or cost effective use of this persons time. One of the recommendations of the stock data validation work undertaken by Savills is that we create such a dedicated resource. Consequently a new post of Database Officer has been included in the proposed new structure.

#### **4. Finance Comments / Implications**

The full-year cost to the HRA of the new structure is £1,935k, 11.9% of the total HRA cost of £16,242k and an increase of £256k from the 2011/12 cost of £1,679k. The increase can be modelled into the 30-year HRA Business Plan.

<b>HRA new structure – full year cost increase</b>	<b>£256K</b>
<b>HRA Savings / Costs already agreed/proposed:</b>	
-Theme5	-59K
-DLO review staffing	-64K
-Year 1 Savings plan	+21K
<b>Net cost of proposals</b>	<b>+£122K</b>

The one off costs associated with these proposals are outlines in confidential Appendix 4.

#### **5. Legal Comments**

There are no substantial legal issues arising from this report.

#### **6. Links to Corporate Aims**

These proposals support the Housing Service’s contribution to the Council’s Corporate Strategy objectives of affordable housing and tackling deprivation.

#### **7. Human Resource Implications**

This review is not about making savings rather it is about ensuring we have the right resources in the right places for where we are now and to prepare us for future challenges. Therefore an incremental process is envisaged to migrate to the new structure once approved. Consequently, where possible, existing posts will be slotted into the new structure sometimes with minor changes to roles, where appropriate and vacancies will be recruited to internally. Migrating to the

new structure will involve discussion and agreement with staff concerned and consultation with UNISON, whilst ensuring the business needs are met.

Initially no posts were put “at risk” of redundancy from these proposals however in response to consultation responses and following closer examination by management, the post holder of the current role of Temporary Accommodation Officer has been put at risk of redundancy. This is because the requirements of the new post in the structure were significantly different from those of the existing post, it has therefore been decided to re-evaluate a changed new post in the structure.

In future there will be clear separation between the work of the new post of Estates Officer (Temporary Accommodation) which will relate to predominantly HRA temporary accommodation units. Tasks relating to Housing Options functions undertaken by the current post of Temporary Accommodation Officer will remain with the Housing Options team. Due to this change, HR advice was that the new post amounted to a significant change and therefore a re-evaluation was required. The current Temporary Accommodation Officer is therefore now at risk of redundancy as the grading of the post may change, although they are ring fenced to the new post of Estates Officer (Temporary Accommodation).

#### **8. Community Safety Implications**

These proposals re affirm the Housing Services’ commitment to combating anti-social behaviour and nuisance on estates for the benefit of residents.

#### **9. Equalities Impact**

There are no significant equalities issues arising from this report as the matters relate to internal staffing.

#### **10. Risk Management**

The proposals outlined in this report better position the service to address the enhanced financial risks on the authority associated with HRA Self Financing.

#### **11. Consultation and next steps.**

This report contains a number of implications for existing staff. As described above where existing staff are directly affected they have been notified. All other staff have been given the opportunity to comment on the proposals contained in this report at scheduled meetings. Appendix section 3 contains a summary of all the consultation responses received along with management responses to the main points raised. As can be seen the consultation process has been a valuable part of this change process and has resulted in a number of changes to the initial proposals.

In addition consultation has been undertaken with Unison via the Unison Change Forum. No specific response has been received from Unison but they have stated that they support the comments from staff that have emerged through the process. In addition the proposals have been considered by the Tenants Services Management Board who were supportive.

Key dates for progression of these proposals is set out below.

06/12/11	Unison Change Forum
07/12/11-09/12/11	Affected Staff Meetings
12/12/11	Report Published
12/12/11-20/01/12	Formal Consultation Period
12/12/11	All Staff Meeting
19/12/11	Tenants Services Management Board
10/01/11	Community Scrutiny Meeting
09/02/12	Executive
21/02/12	Full council

## 12. Recommendations

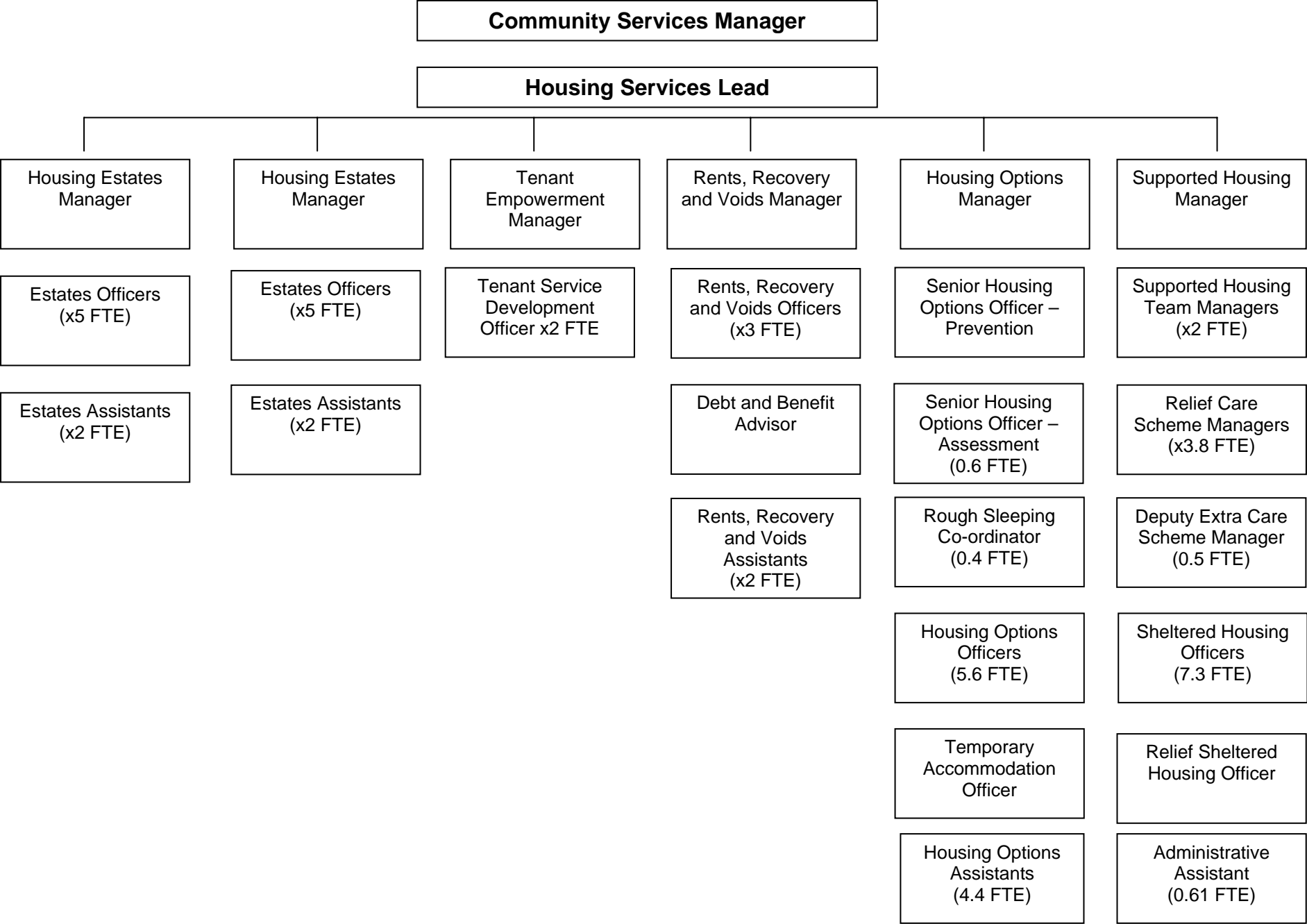
It is recommended that the Executive approves the proposals contained in this report.

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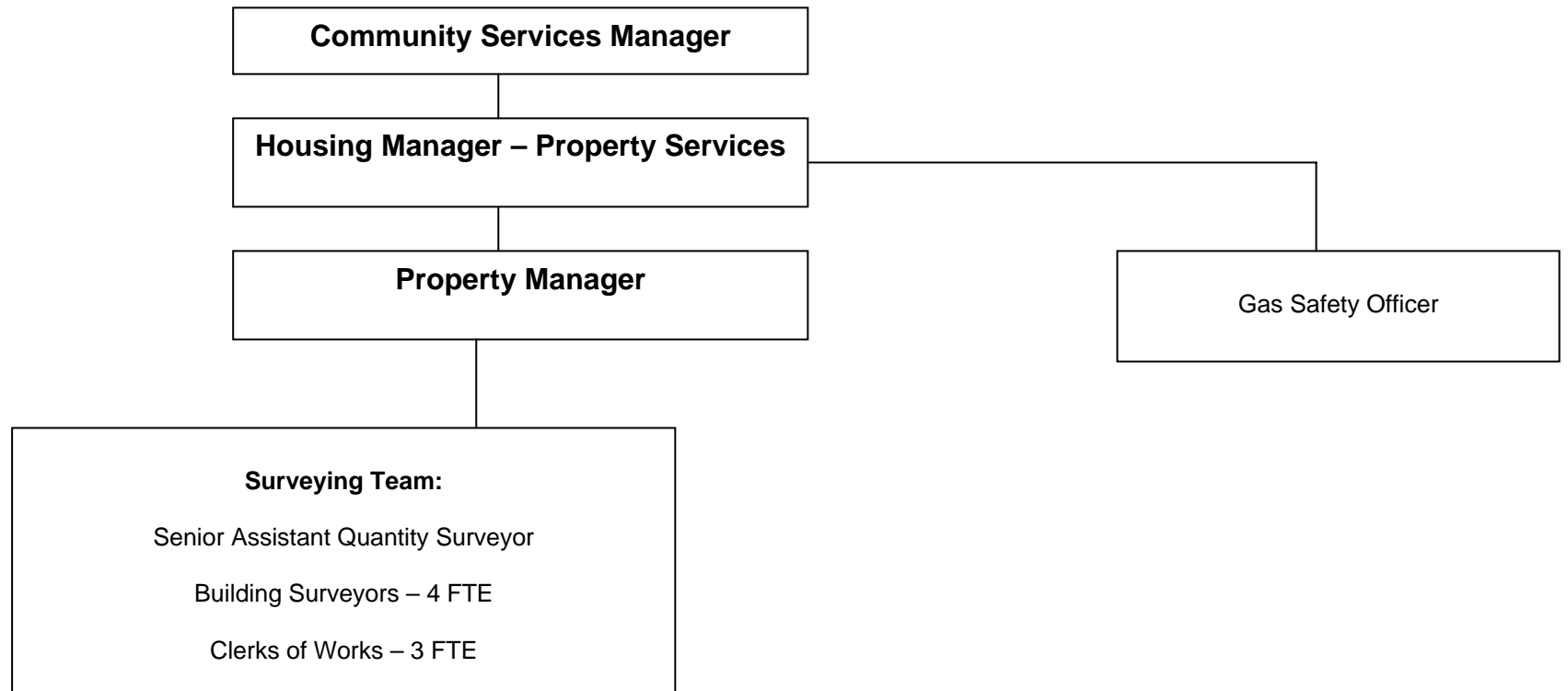
**Housing Services – Existing Structure**

**Appendix 1**



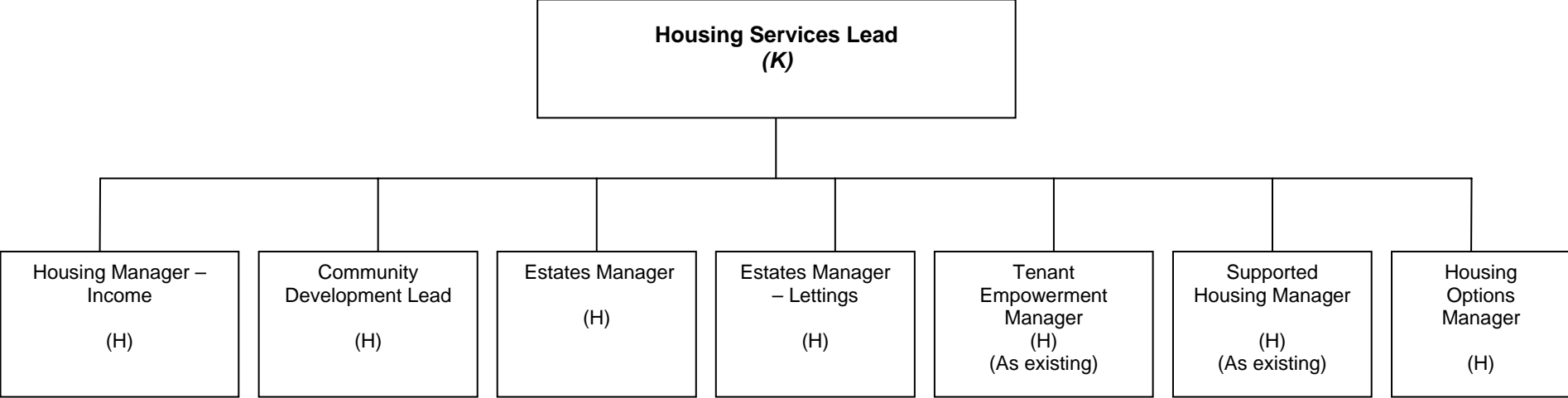
## Housing Property Services – Existing Structure

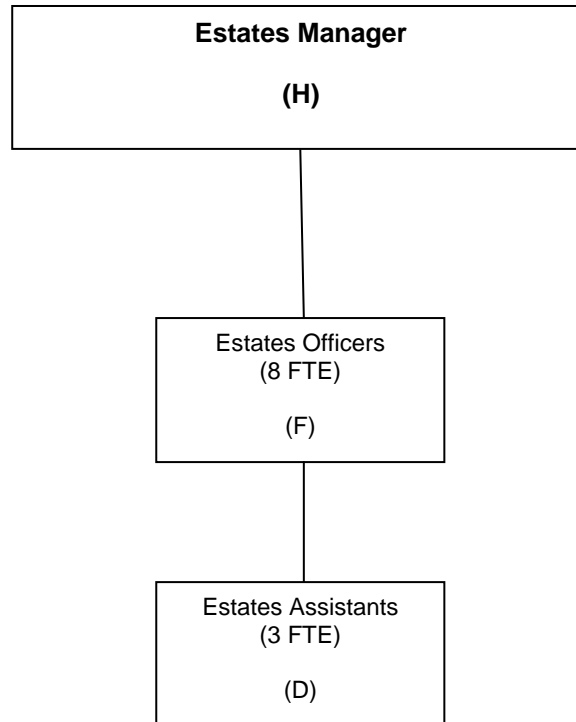
## Appendix 1

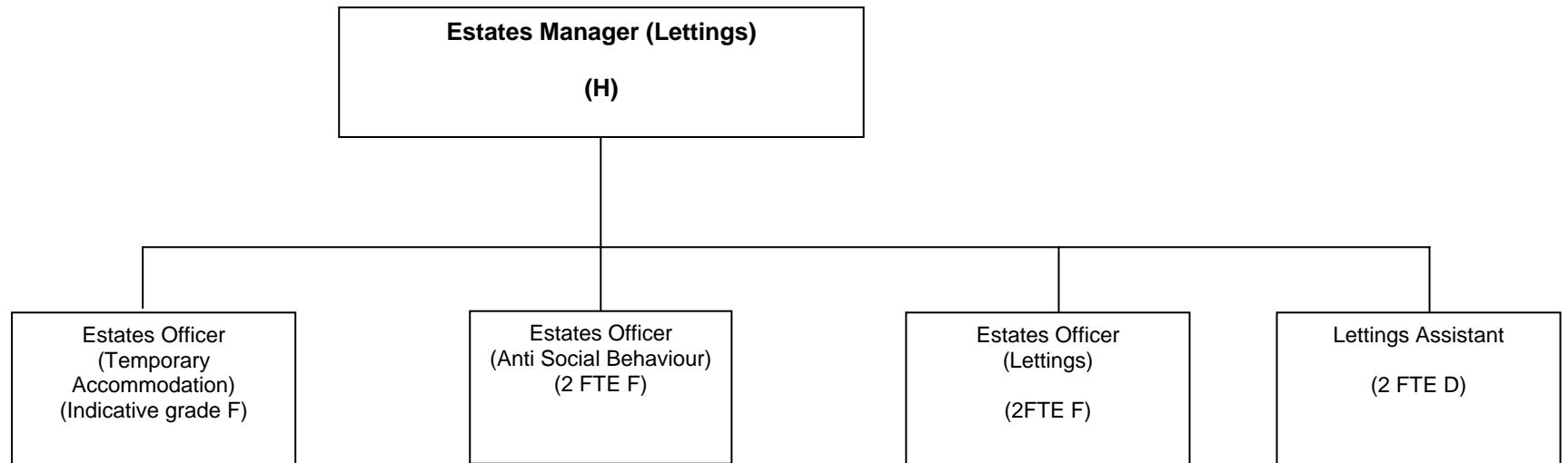


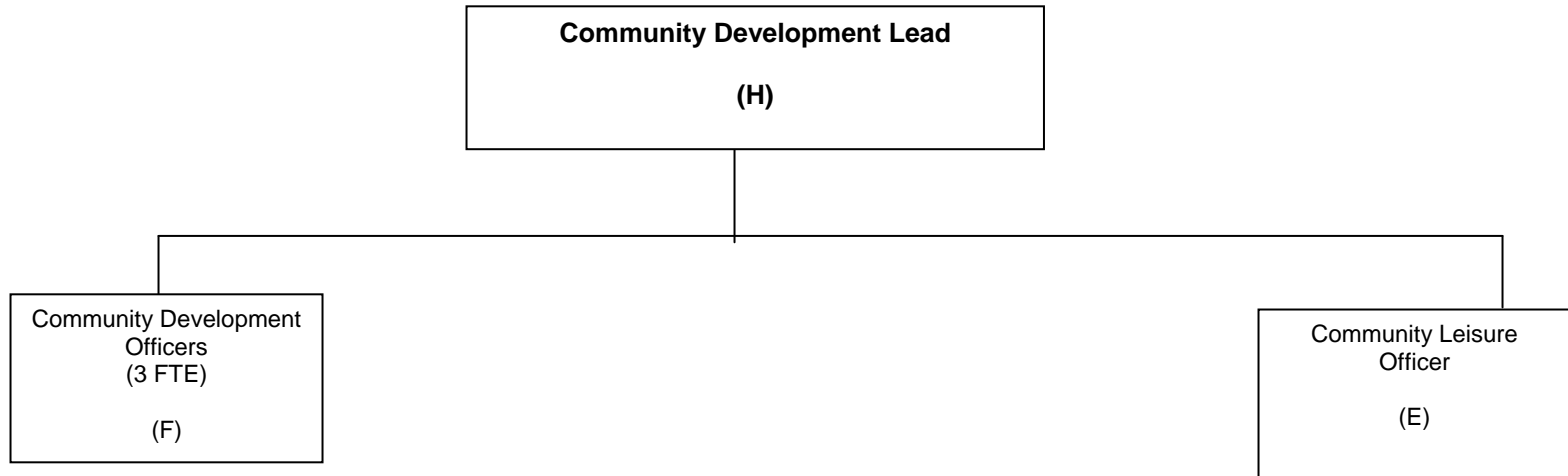
**Housing Service Proposed Structure – Management Structure**

**Appendix 2**



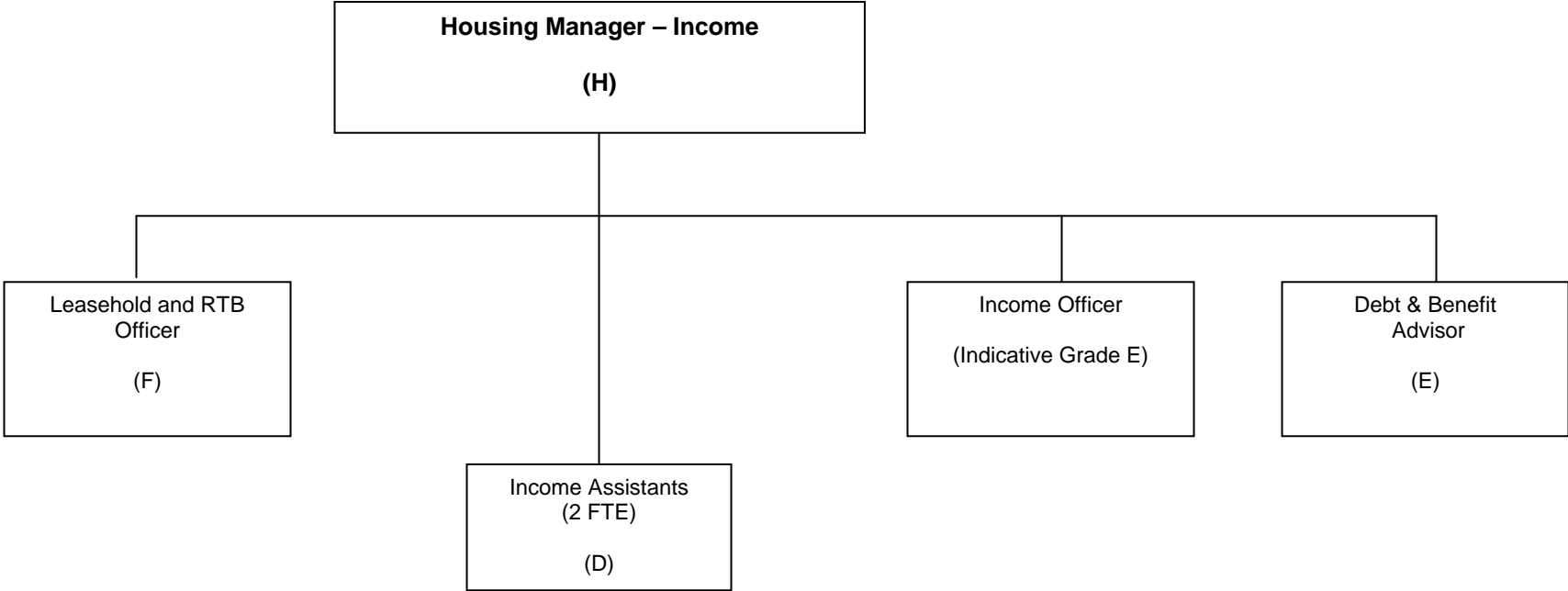






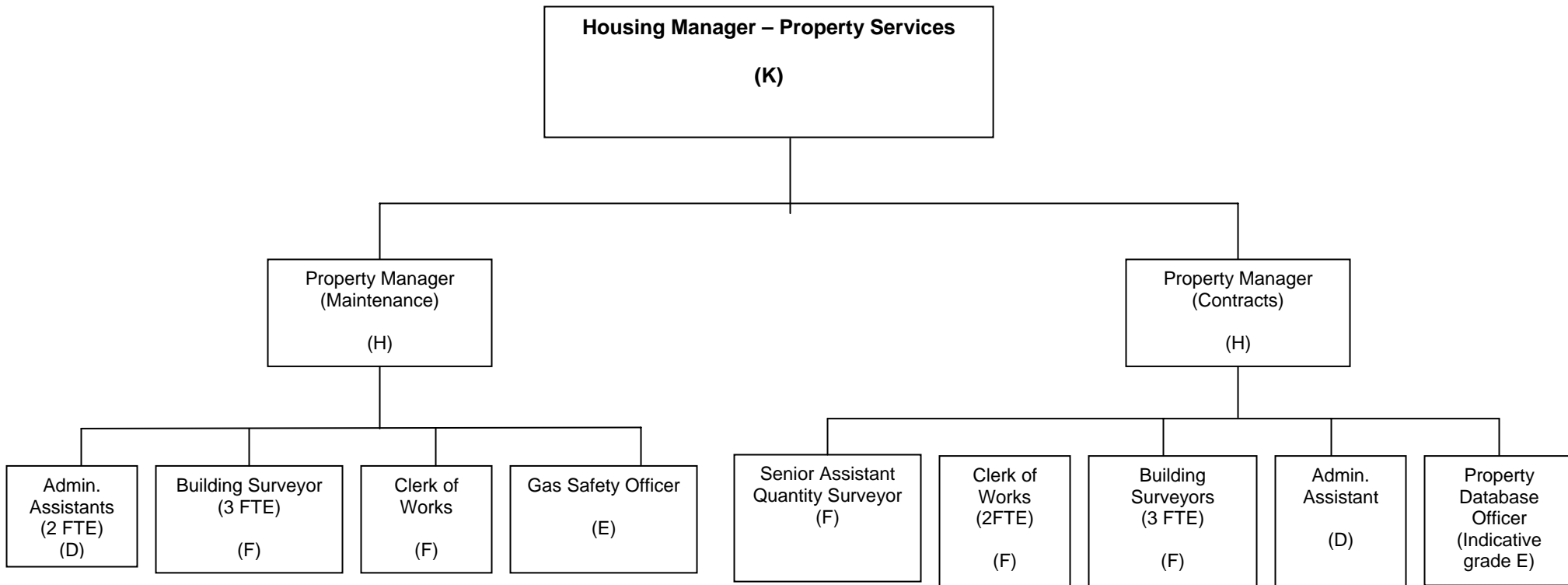
**Housing Service Proposed Structure – Income Team**

**Appendix 2**



# Housing Service Proposed Structure – Property services Team

# Appendix 2





**Housing Services and Community Development Restructure Consultation Responses.**

**Appendix 3.**

<b>Consultation Response</b>	<b>Ref</b>	<b>Management Response</b>
<p>I welcome the proposal to uplift two Estates Officer the current two posts of Voids Officers.</p> <p>I welcome the proposal to increase from one to two lettings assistants this will help with current workloads and hopefully allow additional capacity to take on the extra challenges that will face the lettings team into 2012 and beyond.</p> <p>With regard to the Temporary Accommodation Officer I would raise the following issues for your consideration and comment:</p> <p>I understand that the Temporary Accommodation Officer will continue to have some work in assessing homelessness cases, this could cause potential conflict for work priorities – Can I suggest that when they move teams that this work is no longer part of their job role and is taken up within the Housing Options Team. Can I suggest that the job role be changed to reflect the requirement to work on lettings not just of temporary accommodation but also general needs properties.</p> <p>The Communities Team</p> <p>I can see that a more integrated approach to tackling the causes of ASB would require closer working with colleagues in community development. I have concerns that the great advances made in the last 12 months could be put at risk if the current proposals are implemented unchanged. Can I stress the importance of a robust and effective close working relationship between the generic EOs and the two EOs who tackle ASB. Much of the success of the last 12 months is down to the approach that both the EOs ASB have taken regarding building a good working relationship with the EOs and also our partners. This very good working relationship is entirely the opposite</p>	<p>MS1</p>	<p>Following closer examination of the current role of Temporary Accommodation Officer and the requirements of the new post in the structure it has been decided to re-evaluate a changed new post in the structure. There will be clear separation between the work of the new post of Estates Officer (Temporary Accommodation) which will relate to predominantly HRA temporary accommodation units and tasks relating to Housing Options functions undertaken by the current post of Temporary Accommodation Officer. This will remain with the Housing Options team. Due to this change, HR advice was that the new post amounted to a significant change and therefore a re-evaluation was required. The current Temporary Accommodation Officer is therefore now at risk of redundancy as the grading of the post may change, although they are ring fenced to the new post of Estates Officer (Temporary Accommodation).</p> <p>Following the consultation exercise the proposals relating to the ASB officers have changed. These two officers will remain under the management of Estates Management and be located in the new Lettings team.</p> <p>It is also acknowledged that greater efforts are required to improve liaison, mutual awareness and co-operation between Community Development and all other Housing teams, in particular Estates and Lettings.</p>

<p>of the liaison between our ASB officers and colleagues from community development. This is probably due to the location of both teams but does not bode well for the proposed changes.</p> <p>I want to stress that they do not take on just ASB casework but also continue to provide help assistance and resource to the Estates Team on many other work matters.</p> <p>I would like ask that you re-consider the current proposals, I suggest that to bring some of the current community development resource into the Estates Team may be a better way forward.</p>		
<p>I am unsure how the post of Temporary Accommodation Officer would slot in to the structure and if the Officer would cover Lettings and vice versa – would the post be re-evaluated?</p>	MS2	<p>Following closer examination of the current role of Temporary Accommodation Officer and the requirements of the new post in the structure it has been decided to re-evaluate a changed new post in the structure. There will be clear separation between the work of the new post of Estates Officer (Temporary Accommodation) which will relate to predominantly HRA temporary accommodation units and tasks relating to Housing Options functions undertaken by the current post of Temporary Accommodation Officer. This will remain with the Housing Options team. Due to this change, HR advice was that the new post amounted to a significant change and therefore a re-evaluation was required. The current Temporary Accommodation Officer is therefore now at risk of redundancy as the grading of the post may change, although they are ring fenced to the new post of Estates Officer (Temporary Accommodation).</p>
<p>I believe that the ASB Estate Officers need to remain within the Estates arena – they are enormously helpful to Estates and to us in Lettings and are currently “on hand” whenever needed. If they are moved to Community Development, the risk will be that they are given</p>	MS3	<p>Following the consultation exercise the proposals relating to the ASB officers have changed. These two officers will remain under the management of Estates Management and be located in the new Lettings team.</p>

different priorities and will be unable to spend as much time and effort on the job for which they were taken on.

As regards Lettings, you intend including the Temporary Accommodation post to the Lettings team. The role will be changed as she will not be doing void inspections any more, thus removing part of the workload. Would it not make more sense to simply have another Lettings Officer, on the same grade as the other two Lettings Officers (ie a lower grade) with us all dealing with lettings and also with letting the hostels. If you changed the role so that hostel ASB & recovery of arrears etc were carried out by the Estate Officers, it would make more sense. As the occupants of hostels are likely to end up as our tenants, it would get them into the habit of paying regularly and prepare them for their tenancies. This would also be more cost-effective for TDBC, as the post would be on a lower grade and would have little impact on the Estate Officers, who are already dealing with these matters on a day to day basis, and there are so few hostels to manage.

As regards the Income Section, there really isn't any need for this to be separate from Estates – it would make more sense for the staff to be tied in more closely with the Estate Officers and Lettings side as the work is so closely inter-twined. You could therefore do away with the whole department and its manager, by putting the Income Officers & Assistant in with Lettings, the Debt & Benefit Advisor in with Estates and then the RTB officer's role should be relocated back under Property Services, or even moved to Legal as it is in other authorities. It is a specialist role, and it requires backup that the Income Section staff are unable to offer.

It is also acknowledged that greater efforts are required to improve liaison, mutual awareness and co-operation between Community Development and all other Housing teams, in particular Estates and Lettings.

Following closer examination of the current role of Temporary Accommodation Officer and the requirements of the new post in the structure it has been decided to re-evaluate a changed new post in the structure. There will be clear separation between the work of the new post of Estates Officer (Temporary Accommodation) which will relate to predominantly HRA temporary accommodation units and tasks relating to Housing Options functions undertaken by the current post of Temporary Accommodation Officer. This will remain with the Housing Options team. Due to this change, HR advice was that the new post amounted to a significant change and therefore a re-evaluation was required. The current Temporary Accommodation Officer is therefore now at risk of redundancy as the grading of the post may change, although they are ring fenced to the new post of Estates Officer (Temporary Accommodation).

<p>Furthermore, I cannot understand why you need another Property Manager and additional surveyors. When you took on the three new surveyors earlier this year, I understood the intention was that they would do pre-void inspections, void inspections, post void inspections and asbestos surveys of void properties. Previously, there were three of us doing all of the above (minus the asbestos surveys), whilst also carrying out rent and recovery roles. Why can't they do what they were taken on for, when the workload hasn't increased? How can you justify the cost of this? Isn't it just a case of improving systems and procedures?</p>		<p>The new 30 year Business Plan for Housing includes requirements for a significant increase in the capital programme for improvements to our properties. This greater level of investment requires an increased staff capacity to deliver. Therefore all the proposals for the Property Services team reflect a lift in capacity of this service.</p>
<p>I will like to make an observation to the proposed grading of the RTB &amp; Leasehold Officer role at grade F. I strongly believe that the post and role should be higher than grade F.</p>	MS4	<p>The grading for the post of Leasehold and Right to Buy officer was evaluated (and subsequently appealed) under the Council's current job evaluation scheme. Recent enquiries in relation to similar roles elsewhere have revealed similar grading. There are no grounds for re-assessing the grade of this post.</p>
<p>I have concerns regarding the change in management for the 2 Estates Officers who focus on ASB. It appears that if they change management then the priorities of the management they would then work for may be different to the priorities that they currently work under.</p> <p>They were employed as generic Estate Officers and by moving them out of the team it seems hard to understand how they will then be able to carry out the generic part of the post they are employed to do. It also seems clear that if they move teams then the ASB work will fall back onto the 8 generic Estate Officers remaining and after taking on an extra 200 properties there is no way in which this work will be able to be dealt with in a efficient and effective manner as they are being dealt with now.</p> <p>At the present time the Community Development Team have very little involvement with the Estates Team and it is hard to see in working practice how this would change in the future even with the 2 generic</p>	MS5	<p>Following the consultation exercise the proposals relating to the ASB officers have changed. These two officers will remain under the management of Estates Management and be located in the new Lettings team.</p> <p>It is also acknowledged that greater efforts are required to improve liaison, mutual awareness and co-operation between Community Development and all other Housing teams, in particular Estates and Lettings.</p>

<p>Estates Officers moving to the team which are already based on another floor in the building.</p> <p>I understand that the Estate Assistant are able to express an interest in any of the assistant roles and that the 2 Estate managers can also do this as all the jobs are on the same grade. It seems that the 3 rent recovery and void officers have been slotted into the 2 posts of recovery and they can apply for the jobs of Estates Officer lettings, it seems that the current Estate Officers are not able to express and interest on the lettings posts even though they are on the same pay scale as we are now, which seems to limit any development for Officers within the service.</p>		<p>Details of ring fencing arrangements for the new structure have been shared and agreed with Unison. These will be shared with staff at the 1 February staff meeting and throughout the implementation phase of the project.</p>
<p>My main concerns are the EOs ASB being transferred to different management as I have been working closely with one of the EOs over serious issues on my estate and I think that this may not work in the same way with them working elsewhere with different management because there will be different priorities. When the EOs ASB were introduced to our team as generic Estate Officers it was due to the fact that we were not hitting our ASB targets and it was said that with dedicated people working on that area that things would be better it has taken the best part of the year to have them trained and settled for us to be able to resolve some of the issues and the relationship between them and the Estate Officers is working extremely well. However I feel that this will undo all the good work that has been done, also the Estate Officers all increased their patches by approx 200 properties so if the ASB work was not being covered by the EOs ASB we would not be able to cope with the increase of work.</p> <p>I understand that you feel that they are still going to be part of our team and communication should work well but that has not been the case in the past and we have not been aware of what the Community Development team were working on.</p>	<p>MS6</p>	<p>Following the consultation exercise the proposals relating to the ASB officers have changed. These two officers will remain under the management of Estates Management and be located in the new Lettings team.</p> <p>It is also acknowledged that greater efforts are required to improve liaison, mutual awareness and co-operation between Community Development and all other Housing teams, in particular Estates and Lettings.</p>

<p>I refer to Page 3 paragraph 3 “In the Estate team, the current establishment of eight generic Estate Officers will be maintained”. There are in fact ten generic Estate Officers, albeit two of the Estate Officers have specific responsibility for focusing on complaints of anti social behaviour that affects or involve TDBC tenants. This formula seems to have been successful, in that the eight Estate Officers have been able to concentrate their efforts on estate management and rent arrears. The ASB service, problem solving and partnership working has improved dramatically which has enhanced the reputation of the organisation. The two ASB Officers do provide the general Estate Officers with support for such duties as;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• assisting with evictions and gas break ins,</li> <li>• new tenancy visitors</li> <li>• Joint visits to tenants subject to customer contact markers</li> <li>• Staffing housing surgery meetings</li> <li>• Attending local action team/ community meetings</li> <li>• Attending estate walk abouts.</li> <li>• Covering the telephone enquiries and providing housing and rent arrear advice. This requires an understanding of the rent history and diary functions on Academy.</li> <li>• When the ASB Officers take reports from tenants (be that by telephone, at one of the surgeries or speaking to tenants who call in to TDBC housing reception at either Taunton or Wellington), they retain responsibility for resolving the concerns of the tenant. Although the issues raised may not necessarily be serious anti social behaviour, the officer often resolves the problem to the satisfaction of the tenant without referring it back to the Estate Officer. This provides a timely personal service that minimises delays because messages are not being sent to and fro which ultimately reduces bureaucracy.</li> </ul> <p>The model works well because of the communication, accessibility and team work that exist between the Estate Officers and the ASB Officers.</p>	<p>MS7</p>	<p>Following the consultation exercise the proposals relating to the ASB officers have changed. These two officers will remain under the management of Estates Management and be located in the new Lettings team. It is also acknowledged that greater efforts are required to improve liaison, mutual awareness and co-operation between Community Development and all other Housing teams, in particular Estates and Lettings.</p>
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The nature of the work is such that if the ASB Officers were not in such close proximity to the Estate Officers such information would simply not be exchanged. If the team was not co-located, inevitably the level of support that the ASB Officers could provide would be reduced and this will impact on the ability of eight remaining Estate Officers to provide the level of service they currently achieve.

Careful consideration needs to be given to where the proposed Communities Team is located and the manner and criteria in which "referrals" are made. There is a possibility that if only "serious" ASB is referred to the ASB team, the less serious cases will be neglected (because of Estate Officer capacity issues) which will ultimately undermine the overall improvements seen in case management to date.

I can understand the rationale for the need to develop closer links between the ASB team and Community Development Team (CDT). There needs to be consolidation because an important element of tackling the causes of ASB (problem solving approach) is developing long term community/ diversionary initiatives. This approach requires specialist knowledge and strategic thinking, communication skills, and the ability to persuade partners to commit themselves. Communication and Team work, is again, the key to efficient and co-ordinated working. The structure of the present model does not promote the appropriate level of communication between the ASB Officers and the CDT. The staff are on different floors there is little joint working and the reality is that one team does not know what current initiatives the other team are involved in. Within the Estate Team, it is known that the CDT has a wider remit than dealing with tenant related problems, so there is a reluctance to refer Estate problems to the Community Team. This is a waste of a potentially valuable resource.

Alternative model.

I can foresee problems with the model proposed because the nature of the work and referral mechanism is such that success is dependant on where the team is located. Ease of communication is key.

I would like to propose a consideration is given to an alternative model.

- The two ASB Officers remain as Estate Officers with broad geographic responsibilities for addressing ASB and nuisance neighbour complaints building on the success achieved to date.
- Two officers from the CDT work within the Estate Team, but specifically work with the ASB officers to develop and encourage community participation and involvement. They could concentrate their efforts on promoting residents groups and forging closer links with the Tenant Forum and elected members. They could look at the longer term, sustainable community solutions which would exploit and build upon the partnership working skills this team has developed. Communication and the team's accessibility would improve, which would result in their efforts being more dynamic and responsive to tenants needs. This transfer of the two staff could be funded 100% from the HRA
- One officer from the CDT developing their skills in preparing external funding bids to support initiatives being proposed by the ASB/ Community Team. There are numerous pots of money available to bid for, but the bidding process in itself is an art. With sufficient training and the time to research "best practice" this position could virtually become self financing. This position could be funded 100% from HRA. Performance could be evaluated via the funding attracted by successful bids.
- One officer from CDT retaining the over view for the Council's Community safety strategy. This officer will continue to forge links with officers from other agencies (including the police and Somerset County Council) at the strategic Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership level. An important element of this strategic over view will be auditing initiatives from Housing to ensure they support the aims and objectives of the Council as per the Council's published development plan. The post holder would maintain a similar over view of the Licensing department



<p>to ensure any initiatives compliment the multi agency Night Time Economy strategy. This post could be part funded by the HRA (say 25%)</p> <p>Summary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The ASB Officers should remain as part of the Estate Officer team</li> <li>• There needs to be greater cohesion and a more co-ordinated working with the Community Development Team. Part of the Team should be co-located within the Housing Department.</li> <li>• If funding from the HRA is increased, tenants must benefit proportionately from increased time and efforts being directed to address their concerns.</li> </ul> <p>Greater tenant involvement needs to be developed.</p>		
<p>I have read your report for the proposed restructure, my only query is with the Anti-Social Behaviour Estate Officers moving over to the Community Development Team.</p> <p>My query is, will the work that they are currently carry out with individual cases/tenants still continue to the level that it does now? I have worked with the two Officers and there is a good two-way flow of information between the ASB Officers and the other Estate Officers and the system that is currently in place relating to ASB seems to be working very well and good results relating to ASB are now being achieved and seem to be making real differences to the life of tenants being affected by ASB.</p> <p>One EO ASB and I have worked to turn around the amount of anti-social behaviour in particular in Leycroft Grove, over there last 12 months there has been a crack house closure there and a Local Lettings Plan has been implemented for that area. They have been significantly involved with this project and continues to do so at the moment, will this continue?</p>	MS8	<p>Following the consultation exercise the proposals relating to the ASB officers have changed. These two officers will remain under the management of Estates Management and be located in the new Lettings team.</p> <p>It is also acknowledged that greater efforts are required to improve liaison, mutual awareness and co-operation between Community Development and all other Housing teams, in particular Estates and Lettings.</p>

<p>They have also dealt with some very time consuming and serious ASB tenants in the Holway area and other areas of Lambrook. I think you will be getting the picture that my query is that a system that is working well as it stands and achieving results could take a backward step with the restructure.</p>		
<p>I would like to mention that I feel that the proposal for the EOs ASB, the Estate Officers who focus on ASB to move into the Community Development Team will be a real loss for the Estate Management Team as well as the Lettings Team.</p> <p>I feel both the EOs ASB have been excellent over the past year. Much is solely down to them working very closely with our tenants, other residents, the police, Estate Management, Lettings, and other agencies. Having two dedicated ASB posts has allowed us to provide a more comprehensive ASB service which was initiated by the Council's Task &amp; Finish Group over 2 years ago which is a key issue that our tenants want addressed.</p> <p>In addition to this, the EOs ASB also have the time and capacity to deal with ASB effectively as many of our cases are ongoing and involve a number of visits, liaising with other parties, preparing reports, attending meetings, etc. In the past, I felt Estate Management struggled to provide a good service as we have had to balance our other priorities such as income management, tenancy issues, lettings along with ASB and neighbour nuisance. In a sense, the EOs ASB take on a number of cases and I feel that moving them into the Community Development Team means they may be working under a different remit. Although the EOs ASB focus on ASB, they are able to help our tenants with any other housing issues as firstly, they are Estate Officers and are part of the Estate Management Team.</p> <p>Another improvement is the implementing of clear-cut policies,</p>	<p>MS9</p>	<p>Following the consultation exercise the proposals relating to the ASB officers have changed. These two officers will remain under the management of Estates Management and be located in the new Lettings team.</p> <p>It is also acknowledged that greater efforts are required to improve liaison, mutual awareness and co-operation between Community Development and all other Housing teams, in particular Estates and Lettings.</p>

<p>standards, and strategies which are more transparent for both staff and tenants. One of the EOs ASB has updated the ASB policy in areas such as anti-hate, victim &amp; witness, and domestic violence. They has also worked on service standards, designed posters and leaflets about reporting ASB and created a new risk assessment form for new reports as well as worked on our ASB strategy, the human rights justification for a court case. I understand that he is currently working on information sharing protocols and both the EOs ASB have met our tenants at meetings to give their input on various ASB issues. However, in housing, these policies and standards will continue to need updating. With tenants now scrutinising our work and acting as our regulator, I feel they will want to see continuous improvement and would like regular feedback about our ASB.</p> <p>With regards to our Lettings Team, I think putting them into our Team has been a real benefit and the introduction of another Lettings Assistant will improve the existing service.</p>		
<p>My main concern is the change to the two posts of Estate Officers – specialising in Anti-Social Behaviour. As they are called Estate Officers, it seems strange that they would be taken away and put in a new team under different management. We have formed good relationships with the two officers and are working well to combat Anti Social Behaviour and Neighbour Nuisance issues. At the present time the two officers focus on ASB but also take part in generic Estate management issues when required, most of these times are because there are or it is inevitable that there will be issues of ASB. Although they have a different manager to us, we all fall part of one team, in one office –although the two officers in question are in a different office. If they are to be separated further, then I cannot see how it will work as well as it does now. I can see that it will revert to how it used to be with low level ASB (which quite often can become serious if not dealt with) being dealt with by the remaining 8 Estate Officers who are</p>	MS10	<p>Following the consultation exercise the proposals relating to the ASB officers have changed. These two officers will remain under the management of Estates Management and be located in the new Lettings team.</p> <p>It is also acknowledged that greater efforts are required to improve liaison, mutual awareness and co-operation between Community Development and all other Housing teams, in particular Estates and Lettings.</p>

<p>unable to give the cases the time and attention they deserve.</p> <p>This I can see affecting customer service also. At the moment cases are primarily dealt with by the two Estates Officers ASB but with our input of known tenants, joint visits etc and customers are aware of this. This will surely be affected when they are under different management. Who would deal with complaints or incidents in their absence. Their manager or ours!!! It just does not seem practical to remove them from Housing Management as surely their role is within this area – not community development.</p> <p>They have also been on numerous courses over the last year aimed at ASB and their knowledge and expertise is required to deal with ASB in the best way possible. How is this going to work if their new manager has other projects etc that would need their attention. The two officers really need to be in our office – as explained in our previous meetings and although we stressed how vital it was for the lettings officers to be with us, it was not at the expense of the two ASB Estate Officers. It is vital they remain alongside the other 8 Estate Officers to ensure continuity of work, same aims and priorities and that targets are met.</p>		
<p>In general terms, community development is a reasonable fit with Housing and I absolutely understand the rationale for this. I also appreciate that this is likely to safeguard roles into the medium term.</p> <p>I'd like to talk about the team and team roles before going on to explore my own position. I am also not clear how resources that I currently oversee (eg capital grants, parish play, arts SLAs, a small initiatives budget, CCTV, Youth Initiatives) would be managed. Would I still access them as now in a GF pot or would it be covered by someone else?</p> <p>I think that the Community Development team has forged a role within the council in quick time and is seen as an area where things can get</p>	MS11	<p>Further detailed discussions have been undertaken with this consultee. Specific solutions to the individual issues raised are to be considered by the Corporate Management team shortly. This will inevitably involve some reallocation of tasks across the authority. However it is felt that these changes should be incremental in nature, so for the time being the work of the Community Development team will change very little.</p> <p>A number of general points are worth noting:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Realignment of certain Community Leisure resources and tasks will arise from the current review of this function outlined in the main report.</li> </ul>

done. As such, liaison with the strategic team has been important and I fear that this would be lost with a move. The other side of this equation is that links to estates management which had been perceived as a weakness, would improve. The priority area strategy currently focuses on Halcon and Priorswood and this is a good fit for Housing as there is a high proportion of our tenants in these areas and good links have already been forged with other providers eg Knightstone. My concern would be if focus switched to an area like Eastgate which is on the cusp of deprivation status. This area has an entirely different make up in terms of housing providers and ethnic make up. It is an area with a great many houses in multiple occupation with private landlords and a low number of TD tenants. As a council we would not be well placed to resource this as focus would need to be seen to be on our own tenants. Equally this will mean that if an area like Rockwell Green became the focus, again we might not be well placed to address it.

In terms of team roles and individuals, it seems likely that the team would not have the Community Leisure Officer but would gain two ASB posts. This will clearly need a rethink in terms of how the areas are resourced. Currently, Halcon has two dedicated officers and North Taunton one plus some of the Community Leisure Officer. Broadly, we need to think about the best fit for this team against corporate objectives and those of Housing/Tenants. The three officers concerned are relatively happy with this approach and are prepared to do what is necessary to make it work. I would like to be able to increase community safety capacity across the authority by utilising the ASB posts to service some of the many community safety requests. There is a conflict though in as much as the majority of the community safety work is borough wide or town centre focused and not therefore necessarily directly beneficial to tenants. If the approach of capacity building were ok – and community safety is an area that we are starting to receive some negative feedback in terms of our commitment to the wider county agenda – then I can see this really adding value to the community safety agenda across the piece. It would increase the

- A rationalisation of how and where the authority administers grant pots is required.
- The authority has already acknowledged (and taken steps to improve) the coordination of Section 106 issues.
- There is significant potential for a decline in service provision relating to community safety issues arising from these changes.

knowledge of those involved and improve our own reputation and standing in an area where we have started to lose focus due to the changing nature of roles. Just as an idea of the sort of work that could be taken on, we could include business crime/liaison; ASB steering group/case management/consultation and ASBOs all in one place; Relocatable CCTV (I think as the main contract is GF it might not sit appropriately in Housing); Partnership Against Racial Harassment; Restorative Justice (which will continue in some diminished form); domestic abuse. Many of these areas of work have the dichotomy of a local group/focus but also a need for a county wide picture.

There are a number of corporate community safety items in addition to what has been outlined above. I am often asked to fill in for either the Chief Executive or Legal and Democratic Services Manager at county or regional events such as Safer Somerset or the Chief Executive's meeting at Police Headquarters. As you know, the CCTV contract sits with me and is funded from the GF. This liaison can be sporadic but it will certainly need increased resource in the short to medium term as we consider the best approaches to rationalising the service. Things which come up from time to time such as the Prevent agenda need servicing – for me this means coordinating leads into training their front line staff. We have a Designated Public Places Order – aka a No Drinking Order and we periodically get requests to change or move it. If the Order is changed – for example to cover Longrun – this requires work over approximately 3 to 6 months.

I sit on some corporate groups such as the Priority Areas Strategy group and the Halcon regeneration project. I have been asked to continue working on the swimming pool project and this will clearly require a great deal of input from visiting similar projects to project managing the process.

During the past 18-20 months in post, many of the projects that I have delivered would arguably have benefited tenants and so could sit with

a Housing role. This would include play areas at Taunton Green and the new site at ASDA. There are a number of other play areas eg Cotford St Luke in 2010 and Wellington Park into the future that this could not be said for. All of the work around Hamilton skate park would be a difficult fit with Housing albeit it is an argument that could be forwarded.

In terms of parks and open spaces, there are numerous queries and activities required related to Longrun from fishing rights to working on dedicating the field for next year's Jubilee as well as funding bids with Somerset Nature. I am working with the Strategic Director in relation to the car park at Fons George (Vivary) and trying to ensure that we get a best fit for council/Tone/golf and bowls clubs/users. Also in Vivary I am working with the Strategic Director and the cricket club in relation to risks associated with the ground's proximity to the new play area which inexplicably hadn't been addressed in planning the site. I am responsible for the demolition of Galmington and Hamilton pavilions as well as the Chestnut Club. Hamilton skate park remains on the agenda, as does the possibility of building a community facility on the site of the old pavilion. At Victoria Park there is a desire to upgrade the existing pavilion, possibly with Football Foundation money. The Community Leisure Officer and I are also involved in the proposed community hub at French Weir.

There are a number of community issues which come through me, from requests for facilities eg Staplegrove and Norton to the question of what to do with the YMCA. I am actively working with their management and meeting the manager of Bridgwater YMCA to try to find a workable solution for this building, their members and potentially a new site (with associated housing).

Planning/106 sit with me in as much as every application is passed to me for comment in relation to what we require for play, outdoor and indoor recreation as well as public art. The Community Leisure Officer

<p>has the handle on s106 but frequently requires guidance in the decision making stages.</p>		
<p>Income Team</p> <p>The addition of an extra resource into the team will benefit greatly, there is a lot of administration work that happens and at times of holiday and sickness can stretch the rest of the team.</p> <p>An additional Officer would be beneficial, however I would with the present work load of this team wonder if there would be enough to cover the officer post. I am not aware exactly how this team will be required to operate in the future, I am aware that it wont be how it is at the present time. I would like to know as soon as possible in order to get a plan together.</p> <p>With this is mind, I think that the additional resource would be better placed in another assistant. This would free up the remaining Income Officers time if the admin of this post was taken away from them, this in turn would leave them some time to carry out some additional Income duties. Likewise the extra admin resource would enable the RTB &amp; Leasehold officer to be able to focus on the more strategic areas of the role. The 2 assistants would be able to work alongside each other and provide cover which we don't have at this current time. The assistants would also be able to provide income support and would be able to pull together statistical information as and when required. The team would then be able to flow together better and would be more efficient.</p>	<p>MS12</p>	<p>Changes have been made to the proposals in that the number of proposed Income Officers has been reduced from two to one and the number of Income Assistants proposed has been increased from one to two. This change ensures tasks are undertaken at the right level in the structure and allows the two Income Assistants to provide some support to the Leasehold and Right to Buy post.</p>



