

**To: Members of the Special Sub-Group**

**Councillors Chambers, Hayfield, Humphreys, Jenns, Singh and M Stanley**

**For the information of the other Members of the Council**

## **SPECIAL SUB-GROUP**

**22 MAY 2018**

The Special Sub-Group will meet in the Committee Room, The Council House, South Street, Atherstone on Tuesday 22 May 2018 at 6.30 pm.

### **AGENDA**

#### **PART I - PUBLIC BUSINESS**

- 1 Evacuation Procedure.**
- 2 Apologies for Absence / Members away on official Council business.**
- 3 Disclosable Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests**
- 4 Public Participation**

Up to twenty minutes will be set aside for members of the public to ask questions or to put their views to elected Members. Participants are restricted to five minutes each. If you wish to speak at the meeting please contact David Harris on 01827 719222 or email [democraticservices@northwarks.gov.uk](mailto:democraticservices@northwarks.gov.uk).

## **ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AND DECISION (WHITE PAPERS)**

- 5 **Update Report on Human Resources Issues** - Report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Finance and Human Resources)

### **Summary**

This report summarises work done by the Human Resources team in 2017/18 and highlights work to be undertaken in 2018/19. It provides details of the sickness levels for the period of April 2017 to March 2018.

The Contact Officer for this report is Kerry Drakeley (719300)

- 6 **Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and Arrangements for the Housing Options Team** – Report of the Assistant Director (Housing)

### **Summary**

At its meeting on 19 March 2018 the Resources Board agreed a revised Homelessness Strategy for the Borough. As part of its considerations the Board agreed to proposals to review the Housing Options Team to ensure that the duties set out in the new Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 are met. The proposals for the team are set out here for consideration.

The Contact Officer for this report is Angela Coates (719369).

JERRY HUTCHINSON  
Chief Executive

**For general enquiries please contact David Harris, Democratic Services Manager, on 01827 719222 or via e-mail – [davidharris@northwarks.gov.uk](mailto:davidharris@northwarks.gov.uk).**

**For enquiries about specific reports please contact the officer named in the report.**

## Agenda Item No 5

### Special Sub-Group

22 May 2018

**Report of the Assistant Chief Executive  
(Finance and Human Resources)**

**Update Report on Human  
Resources Issues**

#### 1 Summary

- 1.1 This report summarises work done by the Human Resources team in 2017/18 and highlights work to be undertaken in 2018/19. It provides details of the sickness levels for the period of April 2017 to March 2018.

#### **Recommendation to the Sub-Group**

**That the report be noted.**

#### 2 Introduction

- 2.1 This report provides an update on Human Resources issues and the position on sickness for 2017/18, and in addition, highlights work to be undertaken in 2018/19.

#### 3 Health and Absence Management

##### 3.1 Summary of Sickness Absence 2017/18 (April 2017 – March 2018)

- 3.1.1 Absence Management is recorded for all employees, and is then analysed into short and long term absence. Comparing the same time period in 2016/17 to 2017/18 there is a large decrease in long term sickness absence per full time equivalent (FTE), 3.48 and an increase, 0.38 in short term sickness. The position is summarised in the table below, with additional detail given at Appendix A.

Type	2016/17	2017/18
Short Term	4.04 days per FTE	4.42 days per FTE
Long Term	7.77 days per FTE	4.29 days per FTE
<b>Total</b>	<b>11.81 days per FTE</b>	<b>8.71 days per FTE</b>

- 3.1.2 In line with the Attendance Management Policy short-term sickness absence reports are sent to Assistant Directors on a monthly basis. HR also meets with the Assistant Directors on a bi-monthly basis to provide advice and to discuss what action they have taken within their Divisions. The aim of these reports and meetings is to increase managers' awareness of sickness absence within their Divisions, which should aid proactive and consistent management of absence issues and will contribute to minimising short-term

absence figures. Managers now take employees with habitual short-term absences to case management earlier.

3.1.3 The long-term sickness absence is being managed either by getting staff back to work or them exiting the organisation either on ill-health retirement, dismissal or by resignation. Those with significant long-term absence equates to 14 employees having lost a total of 859.15 days. 10 of these employees have successfully returned to work, 1 passed away, and 3 have left the Council.

. . . 3.1.4 Appendix B shows the reasons for the number of days lost per FTE. The main reasons for absence relate to: Stress, Operation/Post-Operative, Anxiety/Depression and Back.

#### **4 Recruitment, Retention and Selection**

4.1 There were a number of starters and leavers between April 2017 to March 2018. There were 54 leavers, including 5 employees who retired, 3 dismissals, 9 redundancies, 33 resignations, 2 deceased and 2 end of contract (TUPE transferred out). There were 39 starters. This equates to a labour turnover of 17.32% (12.19% voluntary leavers).

4.2 The Council has continued with the strategy of reviewing all posts that become vacant. Those posts that need to be filled are recruited to internally where possible. This supports the Council's ability in succession planning.

#### **5 Policies Procedures and Processes**

5.1 The Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) required the Council to complete a self-assessment audit during 2017/18. The audit indicated that the Council's processes meet the DBS requirements.

5.2 Towards the end of the year, a review of the Council's list of posts requiring DBS checks commenced to ensure that they continue to meet the DBS eligibility requirement. The HR Manager will take the lead on this.

#### **6 Pay and Benefits**

6.1 The Pay Policy statement was updated for 2017/18, and published on the Council's website. A pay award of 1% with effect from 1 April 2017 had been agreed.

6.2 Gender pay reporting legislation requires employers with 250 or more employees to publish statutory calculations every year showing how large the pay gap is between their male and female employees. Employers in the public sector must base their pay data on staff employed on a "snapshot" date of 31 March each year and will have 12 months to publish the information on their own website and to upload it to a Government website. This year has been the first year for employers to report; therefore, the Council's report for the snapshot date of 31 March 2017 was published in March 2018 and the results are as follows:

- The mean gender pay gap for the Council is 1.2%

- The median gender pay gap for the Council is 4.5%
- The Council does not pay bonus payments

6.3 To date, the steps the Council has taken to promote gender diversity in all areas of its workforce include a Flexible Working Policy which is available to all employees regardless of their gender and applies in the majority of job roles / service areas. In the coming year, the Council is also committed to reviewing its recruitment practices; for example, are roles targeted at male candidates and is the literature equally attractive to male and female candidates. In addition, the Council's commitment to flexible working will be highlighted in job advertisements where appropriate.

6.4 The cycle to work scheme (Government-approved salary sacrifice initiative allowing employees to hire a bike and accessories) was successfully run in June 2017. The window for applications is set at once a year for the month of June.

## 7 Learning, Training and Development

7.1 In the 2017/18 training year, Principal Officers received a 360-degree appraisal with the HR section managing the process and producing the analysis in house. An external consultant provided the feedback to the officers and produced a report of the overall findings.

7.2 The consultant reported that managers remain loyal and committed to the organisation and they expressed that getting the results and having the feedback was a very positive and valuable experience. The majority of reports demonstrated an improvement in the performance of managers. The consultant highlighted that a theme across the feedback sessions with managers was issues with delegation, time management and prioritising tasks during times when resources are being strained across services.

7.3 Our E learning programme is currently covering Health and Safety, Fraud Awareness, Equality and Diversity, Customer Service, Data Protection, Freedom of Information, Bribery Act 2010, Staff Reviews (Appraisals). The HR Manager continues to work with the administrator to develop modules for NWBC. Working in collaboration with the other Local Authorities in Staffordshire and Warwickshire, the Council benefits from cost effective or free training.

7.4 During the 2017/18 training year, the Council ran in house courses including Child Protection, Adult Safeguarding and Health and Safety courses (e.g. First Aid and Manual Handling).

7.5 The apprenticeship levy came into effect from 6 April 2017. The levy is a charge of 0.5 per cent of the employer's annual pay bill, which applies to employers in England, who have an annual pay bill above £3m. All employers will receive a £15,000 annual allowance, which can be used to fund the apprenticeship training. The Council has a target of 2.3%, for its workforce to be in apprenticeships from 2017/18 - 2020/21 inclusive. The HR team will assist Divisions with the consideration of apprenticeships, where appropriate, in order to pay due regard to the target and to utilise the annual allowance. There have been some initial difficulties in accessing appropriate courses that

have a recognised apprenticeship standard approved for delivery in order to use the allowance.

## **8 Safety Management**

8.1 Managers undertake risk assessments, safe systems of work and safety audits in their work areas.

8.2 As part of the new structure in Human Resources, a Health and Safety Officer post for health and safety work was created. This was filled in January 2018. The new post holder has met with managers and Assistant Directors to learn about activities undertaken in all the service areas of the Council. Initial duties have also included an accident investigation and a corporate audit of risk assessments.

## **9 Employee Relations**

9.1 The HR team provides advice and support to managers on all HR issues. The HR Manager and the HR Officers provide support to managers and lead, where appropriate, on investigations, disciplinary, grievance, and capability relating to performance or attendance. There were 3 investigations (2 disciplinary and 1 dignity at work) undertaken from April 2017 – March 2018.

9.2 The HR Manager and HR Officers also provide considerable support in the actions up to and including hearing and appeals (if required). Of the disciplinary investigations – 1 resulted in no disciplinary action taken and 1 is an on-going investigation. The Dignity at Work investigation resulted in various management actions including mediation and training/development.

9.3 Service restructures require staff consultations which the HR Manager and the HR Officers undertake with the line managers. These require HR to provide support to both managers and staff, with the queries and information they require during the process. During 2017/18 this involved considerable support during the restructures within Leisure Facilities and HDW (and the associated TUPE transfer for gas services and repairs). In addition, other consultations on changes to terms and conditions within the Waste Services and Revenues & Benefits sections were undertaken.

9.4 The HR team co-ordinated the Staff Survey 2017, which was sent to all employees in October 2017. A total of 230 employees completed the survey, which is a response rate of 49%. The 2016 survey was very positive, and in comparison, the 2017 survey results have dropped slightly, however, overall still had positive results in each section. For example, the question “Overall, I am satisfied with my job” had dropped in comparison to 2016, nonetheless, 84.93% of respondents agreed / strongly agreed with this, which is still a very positive result.

## **10 Areas to be taken forward in 2018/19**

10.1 The Council wishes to maintain the improvement in sickness absence across the Council, and as part of this, intends to review its Occupational Health

Provider. Whilst the Council has been content with the services of the current provider for a numbers of years, it would be beneficial to review the available providers in the market to ensure that a cost effective, efficient service is delivered.

10.2 The national pay negotiations for a two year offer for 2018/19 to 2019/20 have been the most significant for a number of years, in light of the need to accommodate the provisions of the National Living Wage (NLW) as it progresses to full implementation by 2020. The pay award has been agreed and consists of:

- In 2018/19, staff on SCP20 and above will receive a pay award of 2.0%. Staff on SCPs 6-19 incl. will receive a higher percentage pay award in order to meet the NLW provisions for full implementation.
- In 2019/20, there will be a redefinition of the national pay spine throughout to reintroduce a consistent differential between pay points, that will see all staff on current SCP 29 and above a pay award of 2.0% and staff on current SCPs 6-28 incl. receive a higher percentage pay award in order to meet the NLW provisions for full implementation.

10.3 The pay award agreed doesn't include Chief Executive or Chief Officers. The pay negotiations for these roles are still underway.

10.4 Some policy work planned for 2017/18, was not completed, due to the considerable work on restructures. During 2018/19, the timetable for policy review will be updated to ensure that progress is made in this area.

10.5 In order to utilise the apprenticeship levy allowance, the HR team will be working with national training provider(s), who can support and assist with the facilitation and delivery of the apprenticeship courses undertaken by staff and the associated administration of the levy allowance.

## **11 Report Implications**

### **11.1 Finance and Value for Money Implications**

11.1.1 These will depend on whether additional resources are used to cover periods of absence. Most short-term absence is absorbed within sections. However, if sickness is long term, and the service could potentially fail as a result of staff shortages, then there would be additional costs to maintain services, either through buying in extra resources or acting up arrangements.

### **11.2 Human Resources Implications**

11.2.1 As detailed in the report.

### **11.3 Equality Implications**

11.3.1 Under the Equality Act there are specific responsibilities specified under the public sector equality duty to ensure that local authorities meet the general equality duty. In terms of Human Resources there are specific codes of practice for employment and for equal pay.

#### 11.4 Links to Council's Priorities

11.4.1 Effective recruitment and management of the workforce contributes to the Council's priority of making the best use of our resources.

The Contact Officer for this report is Kerry Drakeley (719300)

#### Background Papers

Local Government Act 1972 Section 100D, as substituted by the Local Government Act, 2000 Section 97

<b>Background Paper No</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Nature of Background Paper</b>	<b>Date</b>



## APPENDIX A

**ALL SICKNESS**

	2016/17	2017/18	2016/17	2017/18	2016/17	2017/18
Division	Average FTE per Division	Average FTE per Division	Days Lost by FTE	Days Lost by FTE	Sickness per FTE	Sickness per FTE
Assistant Chief Exec	28.97	27.42	105.17	218.32	3.63	7.96
Corporate Services	26.82	25.42	172.86	92.37	6.45	3.63
Streetscape	63.98	65.79	839.53	846.70	13.12	12.87
Leisure & Comm Dev	50.72	51.61	524.44	544.21	10.34	10.54
Community Services	36.87	36.98	309.24	99.30	8.39	2.69
Finance & HR	15.68	15.99	40.08	87.37	2.56	5.46
Housing	87.97	82.88	1,699.65	818.07	19.32	9.87
Internal Audit	2.40	2.20	23.50	1.50	9.79	0.68
Chief Exec	3.62	3.52	26.05	9.19	7.20	2.61
<b>Total</b>	<b>317.03</b>	<b>311.81</b>	<b>3,740.52</b>	<b>2,717.02</b>	<b>11.81</b>	<b>8.71</b>

**SHORT TERM SICKNESS**

	2016/17	2017/18	2016/17	2017/18	2016/17	2017/18
Division	Average FTE per Division	Average FTE per Division	Days Lost by FTE	Days Lost by FTE	Sickness per FTE	Sickness per FTE
Assistant Chief Exec	28.97	27.42	59.73	67.94	2.06	2.48
Corporate Services	26.82	25.42	123.86	72.37	4.62	2.85
Streetscape	63.98	65.79	296.84	368.71	4.64	5.60
Leisure & Comm Dev	50.72	51.61	168.32	286.90	3.32	5.56
Community Services	36.87	36.98	134.36	99.30	3.64	2.69
Finance & HR	15.68	15.99	19.08	30.41	1.22	1.90
Housing	87.97	82.88	442.13	444.60	5.03	5.36
Internal Audit	2.40	2.20	11.50	1.50	4.79	0.68
Chief Exec	3.62	3.52	26.06	9.19	7.20	2.61
<b>Total</b>	<b>317.03</b>	<b>311.81</b>	<b>1,281.88</b>	<b>1,380.92</b>	<b>4.04</b>	<b>4.42</b>

**LONG TERM SICKNESS**

	2016/17	2017/18	2016/17	2017/18	2016/17	2017/18
Division	Average FTE per Division	Average FTE per Division	Days Lost by FTE	Days Lost by FTE	Sickness per FTE	Sickness per FTE
Assistant Chief Exec	28.97	27.42	45.43	150.38	1.57	5.48
Corporate Services	26.82	25.42	49.00	20.00	1.83	0.79
Streetscape	63.98	65.79	544.67	477.99	8.51	7.27
Leisure & Comm Dev	50.72	51.61	357.51	257.31	7.05	4.99
Community Services	36.87	36.98	175.36	0.00	4.76	0.00
Finance & HR	15.68	15.99	21.00	56.96	1.34	3.56
Housing	87.97	82.88	1,257.51	373.47	14.29	4.51
Internal Audit	2.40	2.20	12.00	0.00	5.00	0.00
Chief Exec	3.62	3.52	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>317.03</b>	<b>311.81</b>	<b>2,462.48</b>	<b>1,336.11</b>	<b>7.77</b>	<b>4.29</b>

**Reasons for Sickness**

	Accident At Work	Anxiety / Dep	Back	Cancer	Chest	Cold	ENT / Eye	Flu	Geni- Urin	Heart	Hyper ten	Musc	Neuro	Op & Post Op	Preg	Stom	Stress	Total
<b>NWBC</b>	73.00	344.13	291.74	37.08	155.13	69.85	83.77	240.67	19.26	124.96	39.79	204.83	49.13	377.04	17.00	160.39	429.19	<b>2717.02</b>

<b><u>Sickness Code</u></b>	<b><u>Description</u></b>
Accident At Work	Accident At Work
Anxiety/ Depression	Anxiety, Depression
Back	Back & Neck problems
Cancer	Cancer related
Chest	Chest & Respiratory: to include Chest infections
Cold	Cold symptoms
ENT/Eye	Eye, Ear, Nose & Mouth/Dental : to include sinusitis
Flu	Flu symptoms
Genito-Urinary	Genito Urinary: to include menstrual problems
Heart	Heart Blood pressure& circulation
Hypertension	High Blood Pressure
Muscular	Other musculoskeletal problems
Neurological	Neurological; to include headaches and migraine
Operation & Post Op	Operation, Post Op
Pregnancy	Pregnancy related
Stomach	Stomach, Liver, Kidney & Digestion; to include gastro-enteritis
Stress	Stress, Mental health & fatigue
Unknown	No reason known for absence

## **Agenda Item No 6**

### **Special Sub Group**

**22 May 2018**

**Report of the  
Assistant Director (Housing)**

**Homelessness Reduction Act 2017  
& Arrangements for the Housing  
Options Team**

#### **1 Summary**

- 1.1 At its meeting on 19 March 2018 the Resources Board agreed a revised Homelessness Strategy for the Borough. As part of its considerations the Board agreed to proposals to review the Housing Options Team to ensure that the duties set out in the new Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 are met. The proposals for the team are set out here for consideration.

#### **Recommendation to the Special Sub Group**

**That the staffing proposals set out in the report be agreed.**

#### **2 Consultation**

- 2.1 Unions and staff have been consulted about human resources proposals set out in the report.

#### **3 Introduction**

- 3.1 The Homelessness Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities to carry out a review of all forms of homelessness in their district area and to formulate and publish a homelessness strategy based upon the results of a review. The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 introduces new legislative duties for Local Authorities when they are working with homeless applicants.
- 3.2 Data used to develop a new homelessness strategy shows that homeless applications are increasing in the Borough. During 2016/17, the Council received 142 homelessness applications, compared with 131 the previous year. For the year April 2017 to the end of March 2018 there were 185 applications.
- 3.3 The Council has to have sufficient resources to meet its legislative duties. The Strategy states the vision for the service as being “To prevent homelessness and meet the housing needs of vulnerable households through the provision of high quality and accessible accommodation, support, information and advice.” The key priorities are aligned to the requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act and have been identified as:
- To ensure people are well informed about their housing options

- To prevent people from becoming homeless
- To assist people as soon as possible if they do become homeless so that their homelessness can be relieved by securing sufficient accommodation and support
- To support people to recover from their experience and maintain their accommodation so that do not become homeless again
- To enable people to secure homes that they can afford and maintain

3.4 The Strategy covers a 5 year period and will run until the end of 2023. In order to ensure that it continues to be relevant and up to date, additional actions may be developed and implemented and existing actions changed or updated following a review. It will be reviewed formally in March 2019 to ensure the Council is meeting the requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

#### 4 **Housing Options Team**

4.1 There are two fundamental changes that impact on staff resources now that the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 is in place:

- We have to take a homeless application from applicants who have no priority need or local connection with the Borough. Previously we gave advice and assistance. From 3 April 2018 we **have** to take a homeless application when they are homeless or threatened with homelessness in 56 days (previously 28 days). Linked to this duty are duties to prevent or relieve homelessness.
- We have to take the application in a prescribed form set out in the legislation. We have to do an assessment of needs and provide a personal housing plan. When we have done these we have to keep them under review until matters are resolved.

These two factors mean that caseloads will increase and will be managed for longer.

4.2 Currently the resource we have available to deal with homelessness applications is 1.5 full time equivalents. The full time post is a temporary appointment. These officers are already working at capacity to deal with the current level of homeless applications. There are no other officers in the Options Team that have assessing homeless applications in their job description. This means that more resource is required to meet the requirements of the new Act.

4.3 It has been agreed by the Resources Board that the grant funding which has been made available to support Councils deal with homelessness be used to increase the capacity in the Housing Options Team so that the new level of homelessness applications can be managed. In addition proposals were agreed to make the temporary posts in the team permanent in order to sustain current capacity, change the job descriptions of the Housing Options Officers so that it includes dealing with homelessness applications, increase the working hours of the two job share posts by half a day each and appoint an Apprentice post to support the work of the team.

4.4 The proposal to change the job description of the Housing Options Officers has been subject to consultation with staff and the Unions.

4.5 If the Options Officers are occupied with homelessness applications we will need to support the team to assess housing applications from applicants who are not threatened with homelessness. It is proposed that an apprentice post is developed to support the work of the team.

4.6 The structure of the Housing Management Team is attached at Appendix A. Apart from the addition of an apprentice post these proposals do not change the overall structure. They aim to enhance and sustain current arrangements. This includes the continued provision of a Tenancy Sustainment Officer who is able to give close support to applicants and tenants to ensure that tenancies do not fail. This has been a productive role to date in sustaining tenancies and will be critical to the delivery of the new duties. With regard to the latter the Code of Guidance clearly states that applicants should not only be given accommodation but also support to ensure tenancies do not fail.

## **5 Report Implications**

### **5.1 Finance and Value for Money Implications**

5.1.1 Government has been providing grant funding to support Local Authorities to meet statutory requirements for homelessness for some years. The Council receives a homelessness prevention grant from the Government which assists us to deliver our homelessness services. Funding during 2017-2018 is £44,790 and is expected to be in the region of £46,000 for the next three years. However, in the face of an increasing demand on homelessness services, the Government has also recently redirected funding from the Department of Work and Pensions to Local Authorities to help them meet service requirements. North Warwickshire Borough Council will receive just over £63K for the next two years. The funding is ring fenced for homelessness services. This additional funding was subject to a report to the Resources Board in May 2017 when the recommendation to appoint a Homeless Persons Officer was supported.

5.1.2 In order to help Local Authorities deliver the new legislation new burdens money has been provided. This will add in the region of £14,000 annually to the grant funding already committed by Government.

5.1.3 Meeting homelessness duties are a statutory requirement on the Council. The Human Resources implications of this report are set out below. There will be additional costs to the General Fund of £27,170 to amend the job duties of the Housing Options Officers and increase the working hours of the job share posts by 1 day per week. This can be funded from the additional grant expected and by utilising the earmarked reserve. Charging more of the Housing Options Officers time to the General Fund, will reduce costs in the Housing Revenue Account. If it is agreed that an apprentice can be appointed to support the work of the Options and Lettings Team it is expected that this can be funded from the savings in the Housing Revenue Account.

5.1.4 The service is mainly funded with Government grant. It is expected that the grant revenue will continue given the pressure on Government to reduce homelessness. However there is a proposal to link grant to performance to prevent homelessness in the future. It is proposed that increasing the capacity of the team to deal with the new

legislation is funded from Government grant until mid way through 2021-2022. It is expected that grant funding will continue to fund the proposal from this date but if it does not there will be an implication for the General Fund. This would relate to the temporary posts made permanent and additional resource highlighted in 5.1.3, which could amount to £47,700. The position will be kept under review.

## 5.2 Safer Communities Implications

5.2.1 An important part of the role of the Housing Management Team is to help create nice neighbourhoods where people choose and like to live. Successful prevention strategies will assist with reducing homelessness and safer communities as a consequence.

## 5.3 Legal, Data Protection and Human Rights Implications

5.3.1 The Council is required to conform to the housing regulator's Regulatory Framework and Standards. Our statutory obligations are set out in the Housing and Homelessness Acts.

5.3.2 Any revisions to the Council's procedures and processes arising from the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (HRAct) will need to be compliant with the General Data Protection Regulation. This is currently subject to a draft Data Protection Bill being prepared by the Government. Work is in hand currently to help prepare for compliance with the regulation.

## 5.4 Environment and Sustainability Implications

5.4.1 The Governments focus continues to be on preventing homelessness. Achieving this will have a positive effect on communities.

## 5.5 Equalities Implications

5.5.1 An enhanced homelessness service will assist with improved accessibility of the service to our customers. It will also assist with achieving more cohesive communities by focusing on enabling people to stay in their homes.

5.5.2 The Homelessness Strategy aims to ensure that homelessness and support services are accessible to all client groups and do not discriminate against any particular client group. The Council is required to ensure that policies and decisions relating to homelessness and threatened with homelessness do not amount to unlawful conduct under the Equality Act 2010 and must also comply with the public sector equality duty.

## 5.6 Human Resources Implications

5.6.1 The team members affected by these changes have been consulted and agree with the proposals.

5.6.2 A revised job description has been drafted for the post of Housing Options Officer. This is attached at Appendix B. The changes are shown in italics. The revised role has been subject to the Council's job evaluation process.

...

5.6.3 A job description is being developed for the apprentice role and this will be advertised and recruited in accordance with the Council's procedures.

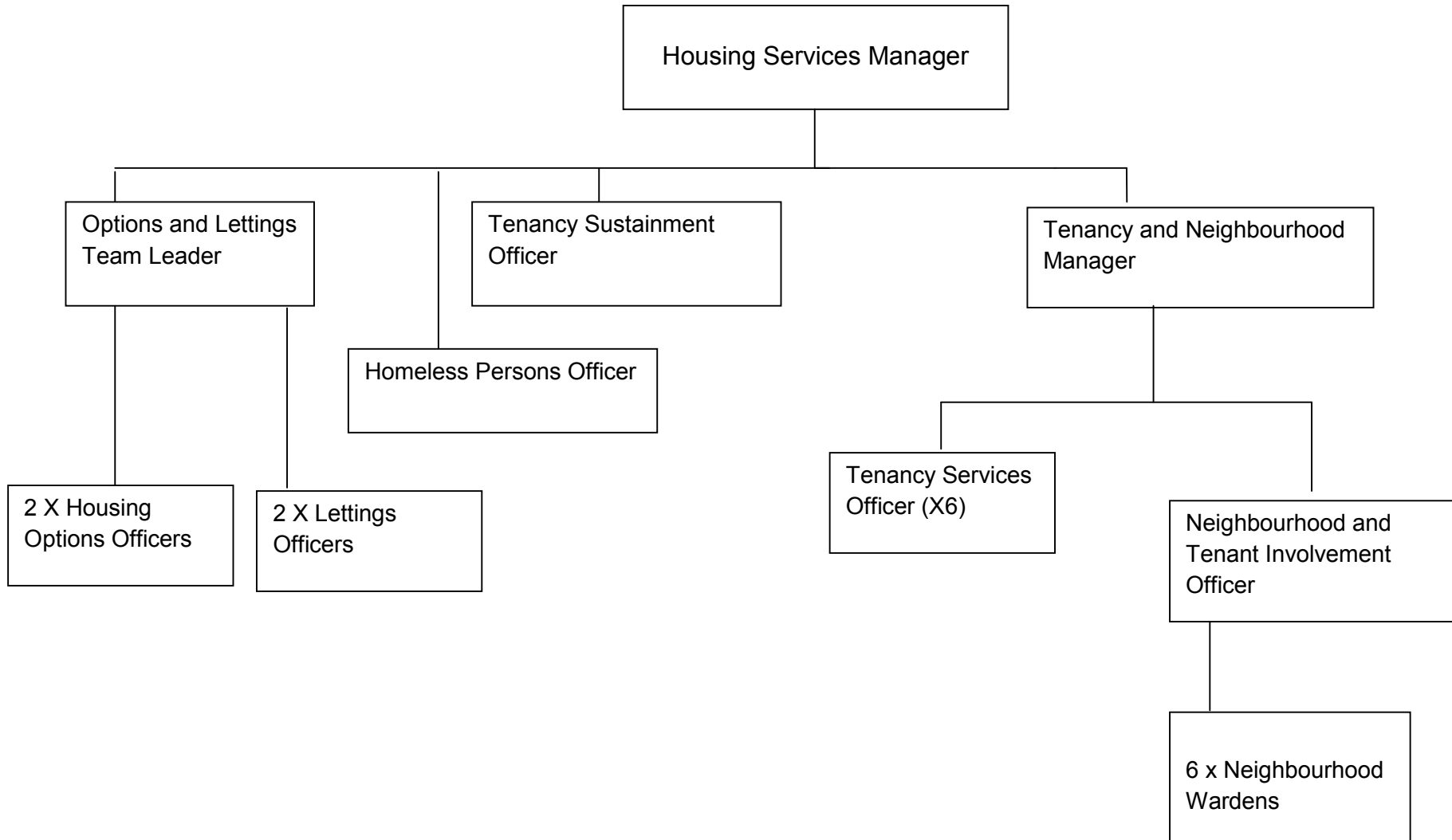
The Contact Officer for this report is Angela Coates (719369)

### **Background Papers**

Local Government Act 1972 Section 100D, as substituted by the Local Government Act, 2000 Section 97

<b>Background Paper No</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Nature of Background Paper</b>	<b>Date</b>
Homelessness Reduction Act 2017	Crown copyright 2017	Sets out the new homelessness legislation.	2017
Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities	Department for Communities and Local Government	Provides a summary of the homelessness legislation and the duties, powers and obligations on housing authorities and others towards people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.	March 2018

**APPENDIX A**





**NORTH WARWICKSHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**JOB DESCRIPTION**

**Directorate:** Housing                      **Post Title:**                      Housing Options Officer

**Division:**      Housing    **Grade:**

**Section:**      Housing Management                      **Post No:**

**Responsible to:** Housing Options & Lettings Team Leader

**Overall Purpose of the Position:**

To inform customers who contact the Council about their housing circumstances about housing options available to them.

*To assess the needs of homeless applicants and deliver the services required for the Prevention and Relief statutory duties and keep cases under review.*

To assess applicants' circumstances in accordance with the Council's Lettings Scheme and register applications as required.

To collect and collate data about applications and the activity on the housing register.

## Principal Responsibilities:

1. To ensure that good quality information about housing options is readily available for customers and to personally convey that information to customers who contact the Council for housing advice.
  2. Help to promote the housing options service to encourage applicants in housing need to use the service and therefore enable the Council to provide assistance through early intervention.
  3. To implement a wide range of housing options. This will include supporting applicants to access options (for example access to prevention funds, debt advice services and support services, private sector leasing schemes, Local Authority Mortgage Scheme, supported housing) as well implementing those that will assist them to find alternative housing (for example mutual exchange register, housing register, rent guarantee scheme).
  4. Administrate the Council's mutual exchange list service as part of providing options for applicants.
  5. *To undertake the initial assessment of the circumstances of homeless applicants and decide whether the Prevention or Relief Duty is owed to them.*
  6. *If the Prevent or Relief duty is owed to undertake a needs assessment of the homeless household, to provide a Personal Housing Plan for the applicant and keep both under review through close case management. Action will be required to take reasonable steps to assist the applicant to sustain their current accommodation or ensure that they are not homeless.*
  7. *Following the initial assessment if the applicant meets the homelessness main duty criteria to ascertain their circumstances and refer them to the Housing Options and Lettings Team Leader or the Homeless Persons Officer.*
- Delete:** *When an applicant who makes contact with the Council is either homeless or threatened with homelessness in 28 days ascertain their circumstances and refer them to the Housing Options Team Leader. Where necessary, under the guidance of the Housing Options Team Leader, assist applicants to access suitable housing options.*
8. *To work closely with and support applicants to find solutions to their housing problems by using either agreed prevention tools or by working with an applicant to agree a bespoke solution to meet their needs.*
  9. To advise applicants whether they qualify to join the Council's Housing Register and whether this is a positive housing option for them.

- 10 To assess individual applicants in accordance with the Lettings Scheme and ensure the efficient and fair implementation of the Council's policy and procedures. This will include undertaking the necessary circumstances and information checks and registering applications. Verifying documentation, acting to prevent fraudulent applications and contacting other professionals as appropriate will be part of these duties.
- 11 To collect and collate, review and report on relevant data on the options service to inform the good management, improvement and development of the service.
- 12 To ensure the Council's housing options and advice service is customer focused and where possible to work with customers to gain feedback in order to improve the service for them and promote the services provided.
- 13 To work closely with partner agencies to provide support services for applicants as well as establishing a network of contacts to assist with providing a comprehensive advice and options service for customers. This will include providing information on the Council's service in order to assist them to find positive outcomes for their customers.
- 14 To attend formal and informal liaison meetings with regard to applicants specifically and the service generally.
- 15 To act flexibly in addressing the aims of the service by supporting the Lettings Officers in the implementation of their duties and provide cover in their absence as well as assistance at times of high demand.
- 16 To provide the highest standards of customer care and equal opportunities in accordance with the Council's policies.
- 17 Any other duties as directed by the Assistant Director (Housing) which are appropriate and commensurate with the grade of the post.

**Person Specification**

**Date:** March 2018

**Post Title:** Housing Options Officer

**Post No:**

**Division:** Housing

**Grade:**

**Salary:**

	<b>Essential (E) Desirable (D)</b>	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Measurement (see below)</b>
<b>Skills, Knowledge, and Experience</b>	D	A sound knowledge of legislation, current national housing policy issues and good practice as it relates to social housing allocations and tenancies.	1,2,3
	E	<i>A working knowledge of homeless legislation.</i>	1,2,3
	E	<i>Ability to make decisions in accordance with homelessness legislation, convey it to an applicant and offer appropriate advice and support to ensure they are not homeless.</i>	1,2,3
	E	Experience of assessing customers circumstances for access to services.	1,2,3
	E	A working knowledge of welfare benefits and good practice in debt advice.	1,2,3
	E	Excellent customer services skills and experience of working in front line customer service.	1,2,3
	E	Excellent communication skills – both written and oral with an ability to present information clearly in a way that promotes understanding. This will include experience of interviewing and negotiating.	1,3
	E	Proven ability to work with customers to resolve issues.	1,3
	E	<i>Able to manage the emotional demands of homeless applicants and support and guide them towards appropriate housing solutions.</i>	1,3
	E	Able to develop and maintain relationships	1,3

		and networks within and outside the Council in order to keep abreast of trends, initiatives and best practice.	1,2,3
	E	Experience of working co-operatively in partnership to deliver services.	1,2,3
	E	Able to plan and manage time and workloads.	1,2,3
	E	Able to work under pressure and maintain acceptable performance.	1,2,3
	D	Excellent IT skills, including Microsoft Office Products, databases and systems administration.	1,2,3
	E	Good level of literacy and numeracy	
	E	Car driver	
<b>Equal Opportunity</b> (Basic Requirement)	E	Must be able to recognise discrimination in its many forms and be willing to put the Council's Equal Opportunities policies into practice.	2,3
	E	Must be committed to implementing good practice on equal opportunity issues	2,3
<b>Qualifications</b>	E	Good educational background	4
<b>Attitude and Motivation</b>	E	Positive and approachable manner.	1,3
	E	Self motivated and enthusiastic.	1,3
	E	An ability to work accurately to deadlines.	1,3
	E	Ability to work flexibly.	1,2,3
	E	Approachable and none judgemental attitude to assessing customers needs.	1,3
	E	Able to plan and organise workloads to meet deadlines that can be unpredictable and cause conflicting demands	1,3
	E	Positive attitude to working as part of a team to deliver and improve services	1,3
	E	Personal qualities of enthusiasm and resilience.	1,3
	E	Must have a pro-active approach to	1,3

		dealing with challenging issues	
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**Measurement:** 1 From application form  
Documentary evidence      2 Test after short listing      3 Probing at interview      4