

HOMELESSNESS & HOUSING ADVICE OFFICER POST

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Members' approval to making the Homelessness & Housing Advice Officer Post (No 35211) a permanent post within the Council's Community Services Division.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 In order to improve the level of performance in respect of the Council's homelessness & housing advice service, an additional post of Homelessness & Housing Advice Officer was implemented on a fixed two year contract that expired at the end of February 2007. The postholder left the Council's employment shortly before Christmas 2006, since which time the post has been vacant.
- 2.2 During the time in which this additional post was in place, there was a significant improvement in this area of the Council's service, which can be demonstrated in the key performance indicator figures detailed below:-

Measure	2004/05	2005/06		2006/07	
RDC 9.3 – Proportion of Homelessness decisions made in 33 working days	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual (3 rd Quarter)
	40%	87%	98%	95%	96.8%
BV 203 – Percentage change in the number of families placed in temporary accommodation	+1.58%	-5.00%	-26.42%	-15%	-47%
BV 183a – Average length of stay in B&B	14 wks	12 wks	4.5 wks	8 wks	7 wks

3 CURRENT SITUATION

- 3.1 With the post now having been vacant for a few months, it has given officers the opportunity to assess the need for this post to continue in the future. The performance of the homelessness & housing advice service is now beginning to deteriorate due to the reduced amount of human resource carrying out the service. Another influencing factor is that the additional post carried out a great deal of homelessness prevention work that produced a very proactive rather than just reactive approach to the service and helped to reduce the number of cases requiring action.

- 3.2 Both the low performance levels of 2004 and the subsequent improvements in the following years have been highlighted in various Audit Commission inspections. Implementing a successful solution to this problem and then potentially returning to the poor performance levels of 2004 would inevitably receive significant criticism in future inspections and, indeed, in possible CPA reassessments not to mention the decrease in service level to the community.

4 PROPOSED FUNDING

- 4.1 If Members were to agree to this proposal, it is suggested that the salary costs of the post be financed from the homelessness grant of £30,000 for 2007/08 that the Council receives from the Government. Consideration could then be given in the budget setting process for 2008/09 as to whether to continue funding the post from this grant or to include it in the Council's overall salary budget. The homelessness grant has been in place for several years, but there is no guarantee that it will continue indefinitely.
- 4.2 The total salary costs of this post range from £21,679 to £26,194 (bottom to top of salary range) inclusive of on-costs and, therefore, by utilizing the homelessness grant there would be no immediate additional impact on the Council's core budget in 2007/08.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The salary costs of the Homelessness & Housing Advice Officer could be met from the homelessness grant that the Council currently receives, with consideration being given in the budget setting process for 2008/09 for inclusion of this post in the overall salaries budget.

6 RECOMMENDATION

- 6.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**
- (1) That the post of the Homelessness & Housing Advice Officer (Post No 35211) be made permanent.
 - (2) To fund the salary costs of this post for 2007/08 from the homelessness grant and to consider its future means of funding through the budget setting process.

Jeremy Bourne

Head of Community Services

Background Papers:-

None

For further information please contact Jeremy Bourne on:-

Tel:- 01702 318163

E-Mail:- jeremy.bourne@rochford.gov.uk

If you would like this report in large print, braille or another language please contact 01702 546366.