

Delegated Decision Report



Subject:	Housing Services Re-Design
Decision maker: Senior Officer	Neil Consterdine – Director of Communities
Decision date:	7 th April 2025
Report author:	Victoria Wood – Head of Housing Needs
Ward (s):	N/A

Reason for decision

The purpose of the report is to seek approval to implement a new staffing structure as consulted on with the service. (Housing Service Re-design consultation document - Appendix 1).

The purpose of the re-design is to create more capacity for front line service delivery enabling the service to focus on homelessness prevention rather than reacting to emergency, crisis situations some of our residents find themselves in relating to losing their home. This can result in our residents requiring temporary accommodation which can be costly and not the most suitable environment for households to thrive in.

Temporary accommodation costs have been on the increase over recent years due to the high level of demand, and this is having a significant impact on the Council's overall budget pressures. By changing our approach to service delivery, being more prevention focused this should reduce help with the demand for temporary accommodation.

The re-design will also see capacity building within the temporary accommodation team by increasing the number of Move On Support Officers (MOSO). Each MOSO will have their own caseload, working intensively with those residents who reside within temporary accommodation to take a holistic approach – connecting households with training and employment, looking at maximizing their income and dedicating support to search for realistic housing options. This will help reduce a resident's time spent in temporary accommodation and therefore reduce the overall costs to the Council.

Recommendation(s)

Implement the new staffing structure as detailed in Appendix 2. The consultation document shows how extra capacity can be brought into the structure which will allow resources to be deployed effectively and efficiently to meet service demand which will in turn will contribute to the Council's overall budget reduction program by firstly reducing the need for temporary accommodation by redesigning service delivery to be more

prevention focused. Secondly, if residents do need to reside in temporary accommodation, they will have dedicated, holistic help and support to move them on into their own home as quickly as possible. The re-design has been developed in-line with the existing budget capacity and bare no extra cost to the Council.

Background

In March 2024 a report was taken to Cabinet declaring a local housing crisis. As a response to the crisis a series of recommendations were made. This included stabilising the existing staffing structure (there were a number of fixed term posts and turnover of staff was high) whilst a full service review was undertaken in order to:

- Facilitate any voluntary redundancies at all levels within the service.
- Determine whether operational housing services are fit for purpose, statutorily compliant and robust to ensure we can deliver the best customer service and work in a prevention focused way.
- Determine whether we have enough strategic capacity to respond to changes in legislative requirements and contribute effectively to the delivery of the temporary accommodation mitigation plan and the Council's ambitious creating a better place program whilst remaining statutorily compliant.

The review has now been completed, and the key findings of this are:

- That capacity for front line officers can be increased to become more prevention focused.
- Improvement can be made to processes to achieve operational efficiencies through collaborative working making better use of resources.
- Enhance the flexibility and sustainability of the service to enable an efficient and effective response to on-going and future challenges and opportunities.

The rational for change and key drivers are:

- Ensuring the service can cope with the increase in demand for housing related support
- Ensuring statutory compliance – key focus on homelessness prevention to provide better outcomes for our residents
- Making best use of limited Council resources
- Ensuring the strategic function can contribute effectively in the delivery of the temporary accommodation mitigation plan and the council's creating a better place program

- Ensuring capacity within the structure to deliver the work programs identified within the various Council's strategies (i.e. Housing Strategy, Homelessness Strategy)
- Establishing integrated multi-agency working arrangements with clusters to provide advice and support to our residents in the right place at the right time.

Following consultation with the service and trade unions and taking onboard their feedback some small amendments have been made to the original proposed structure.

The proposals for change are:

Deletion of the following posts:

- 1 FTE Housing Options Service Manager (Grade 10)
- 2 FTE Business Support Officers (Grade 2)
- 1 FTE Senior Housing Needs Officer (Allocations) (Grade 8)
- 1 FTE Principal Housing Strategy Officer (Allocations) (Grade 9)
- 1 FTE Principal Housing Strategy Officer (Accommodation Lead) (Grade 9)
- 1 FTE Central Access Point Officer (Grade 5)
- 2 FTE Temporary Accommodation Officers (Grade 5)
- 1 FTE Temporary Accommodation Move on Support Officer (DA) (Grade 6)
- 4 FTE Engagement Officers (Grade 4)

Creation of the following posts:

- 1 FTE Homelessness Prevention and Assessment Manager (Grade 10)
- 1 FTE Temporary Accommodation and Move on Support Manager (Grade 10)
- 1 FTE Housing Register and Customer Support Manager (Grade 9)
- 5 FTE (additional) Temporary Accommodation Move on Support Officers (Grade 6)
- 5 FTE (additional) Homelessness Prevention Officers (Grade 6)
- 4 FTE Housing Needs Customer Support Officer (Grade 3)
- 1 FTE (additional) Apprentice
- 1 FTE Housing Technical Officer (Grade 7) permanent
- 2 FTE Housing Technical Officer (Grade 7) Fixed Term 12 months (EARP Grant funded)
- 1 FTE PRS Resettlement Support Officer (Grade 5 tbc) Fixed Term 12 months (EARP Grant funded)

The NJC grades outlined on the proposed new structure, and the job descriptions have been ratified through the SSNG panel process.

Alternative option(s) to be considered

Option 1 – do nothing and continue with the current staffing arrangements as they currently are. This is not the preferred option as there isn't enough capacity within the housing service to deliver exceptional customer service to our residents within the current staffing arrangement. The deployment of current resources is inefficient and not prevention focused. There is no dedicated move on support work taking place due to lack of staffing capacity and high numbers in temporary accommodation. This way of working with the lack of resource is contributing to the increasing costs within temporary accommodation and the overall Council budget pressures.

Option 2 – implement the new staffing structure. This is the preferred option.

The proposals show how extra capacity can be brought into the structure and where resources can be deployed effectively and efficiently to meet service demand which will in turn create a better customer experience for the residents of Oldham.

The proposals to the staffing structure within the service re-design complement the new ways of working including supporting the place-based model. The new structure will enable the service to be delivered in a prevention focused way, resulting in less need for temporary accommodation. This coupled with dedicated move on support work for those residents residing in temporary accommodation should see the costs of temporary accommodation decline as the numbers needing the service reduce and those residents who do need temporary accommodation are assisted to move on into their new homes as quickly as possible keeping costs to a minimum. The proposals have been made in line with existing budget capacity and bare no extra cost to the Council.

Consultation

Housing Recovery Board and the relevant senior officers within the Council along with the Cabinet Member for decent homes are aware of the Housing Services Re-design proposals and support the new staffing structure.

Initial consultation with the trade unions took place on 13th January 2025, and they have supported the team through the consultation period which took place throughout February and March 2025.

The teams have been fully consulted through the organisations consultation framework and the summary feedback can be found Appendix 3.

Risks

It is clear through current working practices that there is limited capacity with the housing teams to work in a prevention focused way. The sheer volume of demand puts significant pressure on the current staffing structure where the teams are only able to respond in a crisis management way as priority is ensuring statutory compliance. By continuing to operate in this way, the teams cannot work to prevent homelessness and therefore the number of households requiring temporary accommodation will continue to rise and this will see and increase in significant expenditure to the Council contributing substantially to the overall Council budget pressures.

Implications

Financial	<p>The proposal is that three of the new posts (cost £145k) are temporary to tie in with the grants from which they are to be funded. The remaining additional costs (£462k) are to be funded from the increase in the base budget (£3m) made available for 2025-26. It is hoped that the additional resources will improve efficiency, for example in reducing the time that clients spend in temporary accommodation. (Mike Roberts)</p>
Legal	<p>The service offers statutory provisions and it is therefore important that it is fit for purpose and there are no disruptions to the delivery of services. It is also important that Council services operate as efficiently as possible in order to deliver effective best value services for residents.</p> <p>The proposal is seeking to make alterations to the structure of the service which also includes deletion of posts and addition of other posts. It is noted in the report that the appropriate consultations have been undertaken with staff and unions before any changes to the structure are made and these consultations have been positive and resulted in a slight alteration to the initial proposal. Failure to suitably consult can lead to legal challenge from staff members and subsequent reputational harm.</p> <p>The service should work closely with HR colleagues throughout this process to ensure that HR policies and procedures are followed. (Alex Bougatef – Interim Borough Solicitor)</p>

Equality impact including implications for Children and Young People	Not needed – Service re-design increasing capacity to existing service delivery.
HR	<p>Due to the impact on staffing, the above proposals would amount to a Service Redesign. A Senior HR Advisor would be appointed to support the process, but the HR implications would be as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job descriptions for new roles or roles that are changing (including job title changes) will need to go through JE. • Consultation document to be produced • Early engagement with Trade Union Colleagues • Formal Consultation with staff & Unions • Implementation process – feedback & resubmission of DDR, recruitment/ redeployment/ redundancies (if applicable as a last resort). The Council policies will need to be adhered to. <p>(Julie Lynch (Senior HR Advisor))</p>
Other	N/A

Has the relevant Legal Officer confirmed that the recommendations within this report are lawful and comply with the Council's Constitution?	Yes
Has the relevant Finance Officer confirmed that any expenditure referred to within this report is consistent with the Council's budget?	Yes
Are any of the recommendations within this report contrary to the Policy Framework of the Council?	No

Background Papers under Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

Not applicable

Appendix

1. Housing Services Re-Design Consultation Pack



Final Housing
Options Service Re-

2. New Structure Chart



New Structure Apr
2025.docx

3. Summary Feedback from Consultation



Summary Feedback
from the Housing S

Report author sign-off	Victoria Wood
Role	Head of Housing Needs
Date of sign-off	14 th April 2025

Approval	
Officer approval sign-off	 Neil Consterdine
Role	Director of Communities
Date of sign-off	17 June 2025