

Cabinet Meeting – 8th February 2006

**Joint Report of the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services
and the Director of Children's Services**

Remodelling of Council Services

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of this report is to:
 - Advise the Cabinet of progress made on the re-modelling of Council Services, particularly in relation to the establishment of the new Directorates of Adult, Community and Housing Services and Children's Services.
 - Seek approval of the proposed outline operational and business support functional structures relating to the Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services.
 - Seek authority for the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services, in conjunction with appropriate Cabinet Members to take the necessary actions, as outlined in the report, to more fully establish the new Directorate by April 06.

Background

2. At a previous meeting in June 2005, the Cabinet resolved to establish the new Directorates of Adult Community and Housing Services and Children's Services, as part of its overall approach to the re-modelling of Council Services.
3. Following this decision, we have reviewed current service delivery arrangements, in order to scope in more detail the services needing to be re-aligned within the two new Directorates. Considerable progress towards achieving this re-alignment has also been made in both Directorates, as indicated in the remainder of this report.

Children's Services

4. Work has already been undertaken to:
 - Ensure the smooth transfer from the former Social Services Directorate, of the Assistant Director (Children's Social Care Services), and the children's services for which she is

responsible, into the new Directorate, with effect from October 2005; together with a re-naming of the Division.

- Carry out some initial planning work.
 - Contribute to the work of the wider corporate officer group reviewing future business support needs of Directorates, which is referred to in more detail later in this report.
5. The Directorate is now heavily engaged in preparation for the Joint Area Review (JAR) - the Audit Commission's external review of the Council's arrangements for the delivery of children's services. The inspectors are due to complete their assessment in March 2006, and report their findings in June 2006. Further re-modelling work will need to take account of any recommendations arising from the JAR, and will therefore continue once the outcomes of the review are known.

Adult, Community and Housing Services

6. Significant joint working has been completed to integrate Housing and Adult Care Social Services into a new Directorate, including:
- the establishment of an integrated management team, from September 2005;
 - the drafting of a new vision for the Directorate which identifies our aspirations to 'help people to lead fulfilled and independent lives in homes of their choice, in safe and active communities';
 - joint working between former Housing and Social Services staff to develop new and integrated approaches to policy development, service planning, and performance management; and to identify and secure funding for new service developments and improvements, e.g. the provision of advanced assistive technology to further support the independence of older people;
 - holding multi agency events to enable us all to focus on developing integrative strategies to respond to the outcomes of the Government's Adult White Paper on 'Independence Well Being and Choice';
 - the establishment of a proactive and ongoing programme of staff and union consultation in order to facilitate implementation of the new Directorate;
 - a review of current operational functional responsibilities in order to highlight any adjustments required to secure the best possible management arrangements for all functions within the new Directorate .

This review has identified that the new Directorate is already very well placed to deliver excellent services for the future, with these current arrangements being further enhanced by the transfer, from November 2005, of responsibility for the Council's sheltered housing services from the Assistant Director (Housing Business Services) to the Assistant Director (Older People and Adults with Physical Disabilities) This transfer will further facilitate the considerable joint working that is already undertaken by social care and housing staff in this area and consolidate management responsibility for the total service under one Assistant. Director. This transfer of management responsibility has not caused any change to the nature of the actual front line service delivery of sheltered housing services.

7. Further enhancements of management arrangements are planned, including the consolidation within the Strategy and Private Sector Housing Division of hitherto separate responsibilities to develop the equality and diversity agenda, which existed in the former Social Services and Housing Directorates.
8. We are also mindful of the Council's ongoing programme of improving customers' access to services, and have taken the opportunities afforded by the re-modelling process to identify further front line enquiry services which can be transferred to Dudley Council Plus. We are currently considering the feasibility, where appropriate, of a phased transfer of front line housing management enquiries from housing offices to Dudley Council Plus, commencing with the enquiry service currently provided from the Dudley Area Housing Office. Dudley Council Plus will take on responsibility for these particular front-line enquiry services with effect from April '06.
9. The Housing Contact Centre, is currently managed within the Directorate's Housing Business Services Division and provides a range of services to Council tenants and other members of the public, including the reporting and processing of council house repairs; the provision of the Council's Community Alarm Service (HomeCall); the first line response to telephone enquiries from tenants on housing management issues; and the provision of the Council's out of hours service. As part of the re-modelling process we have undertaken a review the Contact Centre, in order to better address four specific needs:-
 - enhancement of the capacity of the Council's Community Alarm Service (Homecall);
 - enhancement of the Council's out of hours capability;
 - a revision of current business processes in our repairs and maintenance services, both to meet 'best practice' and to secure efficiency gains which will allow us to refocus

expenditure on meeting the Decent Homes Standard within the Council's housing stock;

- the potential to transfer first-line telephone enquiries about housing management services to Dudley Council Plus.

These four issues are interrelated.

10. Firstly, an enhancement of the Council's Community Alarm Service (Homecall) would enable us to take advantage of opportunities for joint working within the Directorate and provide a more extensive service to vulnerable residents of the Borough. It would also provide a vehicle for delivering the Government's Assistive Technology agenda, and help to utilise the grant (in excess of £500,000 over two years) to be made available to Dudley from April 2006. An enhanced Homecall service will also be able to work in partnership with the local Health Trusts to provide a Telecare medical monitoring service.
11. Secondly, we are required to refocus expenditure within the Housing Revenue Account to meet the Decent Homes standard. To this end we have been reviewing our repairs service business processes in line with best practice elsewhere. The repairs function clearly relates to a specific sector of Dudley's residents (the one in five who are Council tenants) and the intention is to extend the concept of the Housing Contact Centre to create a repairs management centre, to be managed within the Housing Building Services Division. The centre will provide a specialist housing repairs service dealing with a complete range of repairs and improvements from inception to completion. This includes the management of the Council's repairs workforce and potentially, key contractors' staff, (we are currently in discussion with our gas contractor about co-location of staff). Together with the relocation of staff currently located in depots, this would allow us to create a centre of excellence and expertise on a whole range of maintenance-related issues. This includes the management of non-emergency repairs and operative at weekends and out of hours. We expect this to generate considerable efficiencies in terms of doing work 'right first time' and reducing abortive calls.
12. Thirdly, approximately 20% of calls to the Housing Contact Centre relate to housing management issues (for example lettings, homelessness and anti-social behaviour). By their very nature these services are more likely to be of universal interest and need to be accessible to all residents. It is suggested that these activities, be transferred to Dudley Council Plus. The opportunity also exists to transfer related funding to Dudley Council Plus.
13. The fourth objective is to provide a platform for an improvement to the Council's out of hours capability. By its very nature, a repairs management centre and community alarm service is geared up to managing a range of circumstances up to and including a major

emergency. The staff training and availability required for this operation will facilitate any desired extension of the Council's out of hours service; including the provision of support to the Council's emergency social work duty team.

14. The overall review of the new Directorate's operational responsibilities has culminated in the identification of an outline structure for the future management of the new Directorate (illustrated in Appendix 1 to this report). This outline structure does not currently accommodate all the anticipated functions of the new Directorate, and may require some further adjustment to take account of the outcomes of the peer assessment review undertaken of the Library service and work which is currently ongoing to establish arrangements for the transfer of Adult Learning, Library and Archive services, scheduled to take place early in the new financial year.
15. Ultimately the new Directorate may also encompass the additional community services, but it is anticipated that any transfer into the Directorate of these services will take place in a later phase of the Council's overall re-modelling programme.

Business Support Needs

16. In order to review the new Directorates' needs for business support, a specific working group has been established comprising of officers from the former DELL, Housing and Social Services Directorates, and supported from an officer from DUE, who has been able to bring to the group, his 'remodelling' expertise, gained when DUE was established.
17. The working group reports directly to us, and has been given the task of:
 - identifying efficient and integrated working arrangements for business services units within the new Directorates;
 - avoiding unnecessary duplication of management responsibilities;
 - avoiding unnecessary disruption or repeated transfer of staff;
 - identifying efficiency savings where possible, particularly in relation to the formation of business services for the Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services;
 - taking into account wider remodelling proposals in respect of the Council's Human Resources and Marketing and Communications functions;

- ensuring that any proposals are fair and equitable, and capable of delivery within employment legislation and through the Council's agreed employment policies and procedures.
18. This review was necessary as, to varying degrees the former Housing, Social Services and DELL Directorates each have staff engaged on business support activities (e.g. financial management, policy and performance management, ICT; human resource management; communication and information services), and it is important to ensure that these activities are aligned appropriately to effectively meet both the corporate needs of the Council and the operational support requirements of the new Directorates.
19. In particular the working group has identified:
- Which, if any, staff ought to be re-located within the new Children's Directorate, to support operational staff who have been relocated from the former Social Services Directorate.
 - Areas of good practice which need to be retained and extended across the new Directorates on a more consistent basis e.g. models of performance management or strategic planning.
 - The impact of the Council's intent to centralise the line management of its Marketing and Communication and Human Resource Management functions, which are currently largely decentralised to Directorates.
 - The potential for service efficiencies as a result of integrating hitherto separate activities. The value of these some of these efficiencies was reported to Cabinet in January, and will also form part of the Council's response to meeting its 'Gershon' responsibilities.
 - A potential future need to prioritise and address practical matters related to the re-alignment of information technology systems to match the transfer of functions across the new Directorates.
20. The working group has also produced an outline functional structure for the delivery of future support services which is included in Appendix 2 to this report. Whilst the structure in this particular Appendix relates to the Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services, the principles contained within it are capable of translation and adaptation to meet the needs of the Council's other Directorate's, which will facilitate the Council's desire for a more consistent and corporate approach to the administration of the Council.
21. In developing this outline functional structure the review team took particular note of the Council's future intentions to centralise certain

support functions, and sought direct guidance from the Council's Head of Personnel and Support Services, and the Head of Marketing and Communications to ensure that the proposed structure was in keeping with their future aspirations for the management of these services. Cabinet will note that the proposed structure in Appendix 2, provides for each of these functions to be directly line-managed on a centralised basis with effect from April 2006). Service delivery will then be developed in partnership with Directorates, in order to secure both Corporate focus and consistency and to meet the operational support needs of Directorates.

Implementing the Proposed Business Services Structure in Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services

22. The implementation of the proposed structure can largely be achieved within existing line management structures, and thus can be enacted with the minimum of disruption to staff or business service delivery. However, it will be necessary to:
- determine arrangements in relation to Human Resource Management and Marketing and Communications functions to secure the implementation of centralised corporate teams and to develop the partnership between these teams and the Directorate;
 - achieve the integration of similar services which are currently supplied from separate business units which exist from the former Social Services and Housing Directorates. This will require some specific adjustments to the roles and responsibilities of a small number of staff to reflect the Directorate's future operational and support needs. Discussions are ongoing between staff and unions, and it is envisaged that that any changes can be amicably and appropriately resolved utilising the Council's existing employment procedures;
 - resolve the position of the Assistant Director Housing Business Services as significant parts of her current role (relating to the management of Sheltered Housing services and the Housing Contact Centre) have been transferred to other Assistant Directors. In addition her current line management responsibilities for Human Resources and Marketing and Communications functions will transfer to the Council's central sections in April 06. The small part of her role that remains in relation to the provision of some business support functions can be subsumed into the work of existing post of Assistant Director (Business Services) hitherto located within the former Social Services Directorate. This matter is considered further in a separate report to this meeting of the Cabinet;

- resolve the position of the Personal Assistant to the former post of Director of Social Services. The duties of this post also included a requirement to line manage a number of other staff. This requirement is no longer necessary and the duties and responsibilities of the post have therefore lessened to the extent that the remaining duties could be more appropriately subsumed into an alternative existing post. This matter is considered further in a separate report to this meeting of the Cabinet.

Finance

23. The implementation of the functional operational and business services structures referred to in this report and identified in Appendices 1 and 2 has the potential to achieve efficiency savings of £400,000. Half of these savings accrue to the Council's General Fund and were reported to the Cabinet meeting in January 2006. The other half accrue to the Housing Revenue Account and will contribute to the achievement of the Decent Homes standard in the Council's stock.
24. The transfer of housing management front line enquiries from the housing contact centre to Dudley Council Plus, and the consequent re-modelling of the contact centre to form a repairs management centre/Homecall team, within the Building Services Division of the Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services referred to in paragraphs 9 -13 of this report will enable resources to the value of £250,000 to be-aligned to Dudley Council Plus. The establishment of the repairs centre will also support the future delivery of Gershon savings in the longer term
25. There are no financial implications within this report with regard to the establishment of the Directorate of Children's Services

Law

26. The requirement to appoint a childrens officer and the provisions leading to the reorganisation of the Directorate of Education and Lifelong Learning and the Directorate of Social Services are contained in the Children Act 2004.
27. The Council can appoint staff for the discharge of its functions upon such terms and conditions as it thinks fit under section 112 of the Local Government Act 1972.

Equality Impact

28. The implementation of proposals in this report will consolidate work on equality and diversity issues within one Division of the Directorate of

Adult, Community and Housing Services. This will re-enforce the Directorate's commitment to securing equality and diversity both in service delivery and employee relations terms. It will bring a cohesive approach and added focus to provide equal opportunities, promote good relations and enable the Directorate to meet its legal responsibilities. The establishment of staffing structures and the deployment of personnel within the new Directorate will be undertaken in accordance with the Council's agreed employment practices..

29. The Director of Children's Services is equally mindful of the need to promote equality and diversity in establishing the Directorate of Children's Services

Recommendations

30. It is recommended that the Cabinet:
- i) Endorses the progress identified in this report on establishing the Children's and Adult, Community and Housing Services Directorates.
 - ii) Approves the proposed outline management structure for the Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services as identified in Appendix 1 to this report.
 - iii) Approves the functional structure proposed for the delivery of Business Services within the new Directorates as identified in Appendix 2 to this report;
 - iv) Authorises the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services in conjunction with the relevant Lead members and officers, to implement all relevant Council employment procedures and practices necessary to establish her new Directorate in line with the principles identified within this report
 - v) Further considers the position of the post-holders of the Asst. Director Housing Business Services and the Personal Assistant to The Director of Social Services by reference to the separate reports submitted to this meeting of the Cabinet.



Linda Sanders
Director of Adult Community & Housing Services

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Freeman". The letters are cursive and somewhat stylized.

John Freeman
Director of Children's Services

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Background Papers - Report to Cabinet June 2005