



AGENDA ITEM: 6(e)

CABINET: 16 September 2014

Report of: Assistant Director Housing & Regeneration / Transformation Manager

Relevant Managing Director: Managing Director (Transformation)

**Relevant Portfolio Holder: Councillor J Houlgrave / Councillor A Fowler /
Councillor D Whittington**

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**SUBJECT: ORGANISATIONAL RE-ENGINEERING – LANDLORD SERVICES
(VOIDS & ALLOCATION, ESTATE MANAGEMENT AND RENT &
MONEY ADVICE) MANAGEMENT REPORT**

Wards affected: Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To consider the findings and recommendations for savings and service improvements contained within the attached Organisational Re-Engineering – Landlord Services Management Report (see Appendix 1).

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET

2.1 That the recommendations for current / further service improvements contained within the Management Report at Section 5.0 be approved.

2.2 That the Assistant Director of Housing and Regeneration and Transformation Manager be given delegated authority to take action in connection with implementing the recommendations at Section 5.0 contained within the Management Report, subject to additional resource requirements being agreed in the future.

3.0 BACKGROUND

3.1 As referred to within the Business Plan, OR is an essential tool in helping to deliver savings and efficiencies for the authority in a planned and co-ordinated way. Clearly, there is the continued need for the authority to:-

- Secure tangible year on year savings and efficiencies, within both front and back office.
- Promote greater accessibility for all citizens by migrating services and the associated workload to 'front of house' i.e. to the website; to the Contact Centre; and face to face via the Customer Service Points (CSP) / Mobile working, thus improving service delivery from the customers' point of view.
- Encourage staff ownership and promote the work undertaken on innovation/maximising the use of new technology, especially at a time of overall budget reduction.
- Deliver more streamlined and customer centric services through harnessing the latest technology, thus maximising customer satisfaction levels in line with increasing citizen expectations.

3.2 This is the tenth OR project the authority has undertaken, having completed similar exercises within the areas of Council Tax; Travel Concessions; Property Services; Street Scene; the corporate implementation of EDM; Environmental Health; Private Sector Housing; Sheltered Housing and Planning Services.

3.3 Following a Major Service Review exercise, Members agreed that the Council's OR Manager would be best utilised to conduct reviews within Housing and Regeneration Services. A 24-month period has been allocated for undertaking this work from April 2013 to March 2015. The OR Manager spent 80% of her time conducting this review; the cost of this was funded from the Housing Revenue Account. The remaining 20% of the OR Manager's time was funded from the General Revenue Account to allow the OR Manager to conduct corporate work.

3.4 It was agreed that the OR Manager's first review would be conducted across three service areas:-

- Voids & Allocations
- Estate Management
- Rent & Money Advice

The project's main focus was to help Housing & Regeneration achieve their vision "*To be a top performing Landlord in an economically vibrant West Lancashire*". It would do this by generating service efficiencies and any savings resulting from this can then be reinvested within the service to support delivery of this vision.

3.5 The review commenced in May 2013 and explored the 'lifecycle' of a tenant, starting at the beginning of the customer's journey when a Housing application is made, through to termination of the tenancy. The attached report (Appendix 1) provides comprehensive details of the findings and subsequent recommendations for service improvements. We would particularly draw your attention to the Executive Summary which gives a useful outline of the review.

4.0 HIGH LEVEL FINDINGS / RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE REVIEW

4.1 Some of the key recommendations include:

- Restructuring of the three teams (Voids & Allocations, Estate Management and Rent & Money Advice).
- Improve the customer experience by opening up access channels and where possible promote “channel shift”. This includes better use of technology to create a customer sign in for the Council’s website, increasing online Housing applications to phase out paper applications completely. As well as further equipping front line staff with the tools to be able to assist customers at “first point of contact” i.e. over the telephone via the Contact Centre / face to face via the Council’s Customer Service Point’s and via Mobile Working. This includes discussing customers’ rent accounts, capturing payments and where appropriate setting up repayment arrangements, booking / rearranging appointments etc.
- Explore flexible working arrangements for Housing staff delivering services, for example to include early evenings/Saturday mornings.
- Develop a set of internal service standards for delivery of work related to Landlord Services.
- Implement the corporate EDM solution within the Landlord Service areas reviewed.

5.0 SAVINGS/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Based on the work that has been completed to date it has been estimated that a cashable saving of £235,000 could be achieved in a full year from the staffing restructure (as highlighted in Section 5.0 the Management Report). The exact value of saving will be dependent on the detailed staffing structure that will be produced in due course as set out in paragraph 6.1. This will then be reinvested into the Housing Revenue Account to help achieve Housing’s vision. Consideration will be given to how these savings can be reinvested through the budget process or future Committee reports.

5.2 The Housing Service has been preparing for the introduction of Universal Credit throughout the review and the possible impact this may have on how the Council delivers its services in the future. Therefore the recommendations contained within the attached report have been agreed with a view to complementing these changes.

5.3 A resource/cash transfer of 2.5 FTE is required for Customer Services, as per recommendations 8 & 9 of the Management report. However as this is to deliver services in a different way using Call Centre technologies and philosophies, it is suggested that future monitoring of this take place to ensure that this resource transfer is accurate. The cashable resource savings of £235,000 set out in item 5.1 of this report takes into account this resource transfer.

5.4 There are a number of areas where additional investment may be required in order to improve service delivery and/or create greater efficiency. Whilst these costs can be met from any savings from the review and within existing Housing

Revenue budgets wherever possible, any additional expenditure will be reported to Members for authorisation where appropriate and in order to agree there is a valid business case. However, the OR Manager has engaged with Housing Service Development team and BTLS during the review in order to confirm, in principle, that all of the recommendations requiring ICT development are achievable. However in order to obtain detailed costings for each recommendation and to satisfy a business case for each initiative, Service Managers will continue to work closely with BTLS to produce a detailed Action plan. Accordingly, a detailed workshop will be subsequently arranged pending Cabinet's approval of the recommendations contained within this report.

- 5.5 Mobile Working is identified within the Housing ICT strategy and therefore any related costs in relation to this have already been accounted for.

6.0 HR IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 As highlighted in Section 4.5.2 of the Management Report, the Assistant Director of Housing and Regeneration will produce a detailed staffing structure in conjunction with the HR Advisor prior to the implementation of the proposed restructure. This will be subject to the normal consultation arrangements and redeployment considerations as appropriate.

- 6.2 Any staffing implications will be managed in accordance with the Council's redundancy and redeployment policy.

7.0 IMPLEMENTATION

- 7.1 There are a number of recommendations within the report, which require ICT development and for this reason it's estimated that the implementation will take approximately 24 months. However, this will be done over managed stages, each representing a practical approach for delivering the proposed service improvements within a realistic timescale. A financial resource has been allocated to employ a dedicated project manager due to the scope and scale of this work who will report to the Housing Operations Manager and work with the implementation team to deliver the agreed recommendations. Members will be kept apprised of this work as it progresses.

8.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The continued roll out of OR will help generate further savings for the authority, whilst simultaneously driving up quality of services. The ability to be able to achieve this continues to be fundamentally important due to the challenging economic climate, together with escalating customer expectations.

9.0 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 9.1 Risk assessments have been conducted throughout the project. Any potential risks are identified within each section of the attached Organisational Re-Engineering – Landlord Services Management Report (see Appendix 1).

There are no background documents (as defined in Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) to this Report.

Equality Impact Assessment

There is a direct impact on members of the public, employees, elected members and / or stakeholders. Therefore an Equality Impact Assessment is required. A formal equality impact assessment is attached as an Appendix to this report, the results of which have been taken into account in the Recommendations contained within this report.

Appendices

1. Appendix 1: Organisational Re-Engineering – Landlord Services Management Report.
2. Appendix 2: Equality Impact Assessment.
3. Appendix 3: Minute of Landlord Services Committee meeting held on 11 September 2014