

## ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1.	<b>Meeting:</b>	<b>Cabinet Member for Safe and Attractive Neighbourhoods</b>
2.	<b>Date:</b>	<b>3rd November 2014</b>
3.	<b>Title:</b>	<b>Area Partnerships Team and Corporate Community Engagement Service Update</b>
4.	<b>Directorate:</b>	<b>Neighbourhoods and Adult Services</b>

### 5. Summary

Further to the report presented to the Cabinet Member on 16<sup>th</sup> June 2014, Minute No.8 refers, this report provides an update on the proposed merger of the Area Partnership Team and the Corporate Community Engagement Service.

The report details the outcome of staff consultation on the proposals and the proposed next steps.

### 6. Recommendations

**That the Cabinet Member notes the report and recommendations and the next steps regarding the implementation of the merger.**

## **6. Background**

A report was presented to the Cabinet Member for Safe and Attractive Neighbourhoods on 16th June 2014, Minute No.8 refers.

The report set out the rationale for and specific proposals relating to the merger of the Area Partnership Team functions currently within the Housing and Communities Service, (the existing team structure is set out in Appendix 1) with the Corporate Community Engagement Service (the current team structure is set out in Appendix 2), to create a corporate 'hub' for community engagement and involvement activity. The merger would enhance coordination of activity and remove potential duplication of effort.

The report recommended that the merger proposals be subject to consultation with staff and unions and that a further report be presented once that process was concluded.

### **6.1 Staff consultation outcome**

The formal 30 day staff consultation started on the 30<sup>th</sup> July 2014 and comprised of union briefings, staff group meetings and one to one meetings, where appropriate, to enable all staff and the unions to raise any issues or concerns they had with regard to the proposals.

The overall feedback on the proposals was very positive with widespread support for the move to new ways of working and refocussing of the work of both teams into a single function.

Trade Union colleagues have raised no objections individually or collectively on behalf of their members on the proposals.

Where comments were received these related to clarification of job roles/duties with a request that these are revisited once the structure has embedded. All other points raised during the discussions were either operational in nature, i.e., what learning and development would be available for staff to take on their new roles; what workloads would some staff be expected to carry forward into their new roles; could job titles change; or personnel related issues.

The proposals include a re-alignment of staff at the current Resident Engagement Officer/Community Development Officer level to ensure that each of the 11 deprived communities within the Borough has an allocated Neighbourhood Development Officer, being the job title of the new combined role. This will require the relocation of an officer from the South of the Borough to the Central area. Discussions have taken place with staff and Unison during the consultation period and it is hoped that this operational move can be achieved through negotiation.

## **6.2 Final proposals for implementation**

It is now recommended that the merger of the Area Partnerships Team and Corporate Community Engagement Service be implemented. The final proposals for implementation are as follows:

- The merged service to be rebranded as the Neighbourhood Partnerships & Engagement Service. The proposed service structure is set out in Appendix 3.
- Unification of the current Resident Engagement Officer and Community Involvement Officer posts within one generic Job and Person Profile. The combined post to be rebranded as Neighbourhood Development Officer.
- Transfer of the Area Partnership Team management responsibility from the Housing & Communities Manager to the Community Engagement Manager. The latter post to be rebranded Neighbourhood Partnerships and Engagement Manager, to reflect this.
- As the 'communities' element of the current Housing and Communities Service is being re-aligned, it is proposed that the retained functions within the service be rebranded 'Housing and Estate Services' and this would be reflected in the service managers revised job title 'Housing and Estate Services Manager'. The revised service structure is set out in Appendix 4.
- The existing Community Support Officers to be rebranded Neighbourhood Support Officers.
- Formal transfer of the Schools Community Cohesion Officer post from the Community Engagement Team, NAS, to the School Effectiveness Service, CYPS, with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015. Funding responsibility for the post will also transfer. This transfer has been agreed with the post holder and CYPS.
- Transfer of 1 Community Engagement Officer to the Neighbourhood Crime and ASB Team within Housing & Estate Services. The duties of the post holder will continue as currently. In order to incorporate the job role into the Neighbourhood Crime and ASB Team, the post will be appropriately rebranded in consultation with the post holder. The post holder will be managed by the Neighbourhood Crime and ASB Manager. The revised team structure is set out in Appendix 5.

## **6.2 Next Steps**

It is proposed that the merger take place from Monday 1<sup>st</sup> December, with a programme of implementation, including staff training and development and

realignment of work stream responsibilities taking place prior to the start of the 2015/16 financial year.

## **7. Finance**

During the preparation for this review, one member of staff sought voluntary severance, which created a saving of £11,500 which was accounted for during 2013/14 and by deleting the post from the establishment, the subsequent staffing budget thereafter has been permanently reduced by that value.

It is also proposed to realise savings of £30k from Community Engagement Service for the financial year of 14/15. These savings will be achieved from revenue budget adjustments within Corporate Community Engagement and proposals have been discussed and agreed with Finance.

Additional savings of £50k in 2015/16 will be delivered within the Neighbourhoods and Housing General Fund Community Cohesion Budget through the transfer of the Schools Community Cohesion Officer to CYPS with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015. This is accepted by CYPS but there has been some confusion regarding the funding arrangements, but it has been explained that funding would cease from April 2015.

Changes to the existing job description of Resident Engagement Officer and Community Involvement Officer will also result in changes to the funding arrangements of the posts. The Resident Engagement Officer posts are 100% Housing Revenue Account funded; the Community Involvement Officer posts are split funded between the HRA and the General Fund. Going forward all posts at this level would be split funded but the funding ratio between HRA and general fund will need to be revisited to ensure no additional pressure is placed upon the General Fund.

## **8. Risks and uncertainties.**

The proposals include a re-alignment of staff at the current Resident Engagement Officer/Community Development Officer level to ensure that each of the 11 deprived communities within the Borough has an allocated Neighbourhood Development Officer. It is hoped that this operational change can be made through a process of staff and union negotiation, which is currently underway. However, should staff feel strongly that they wish to remain in their current geographical area; alternative arrangements will need to be discussed with Human Resources and Unions with regard to the most appropriate process to enable this change to be implemented.

The proposed Job and Person Profile for the new Neighbourhood Development Officer post has been reviewed and agreed at current grade by the Pay and Grading Panel. There were no amendments proposed by staff during the consultation process.

## 9. Background Papers and Consultation.

Cabinet Member for Safe and Attractive Neighbourhoods, 16th June 2014, Minute No.8.

Cabinet Member for Communities and Cohesion, 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2014, Minute No:5

Information and updates have been provided to the Area Assembly Chairs Meeting.

The proposals were discussed with Human Resources and no immediate concerns were raised, subject to usual staff and union consultation processes and pay and grading reviewing any changes to job profiles. This has now been completed as detailed above,

Financial Services have also been consulted.

Audit and Asset Management Service have been consulted with regard to the proposed Housing and Estate Services Manager job title, due to a current post holder titled Estates Manager existing within their service structure. However, it is not anticipated that this will lead to any operational confusion.

NAS DLT has considered and approved the report.

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