



# Cabinet



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<b>Report for:</b>	Cabinet
<b>Title of report:</b>	Chief Housing Officer Post
<b>Date:</b>	12 July 2022
<b>Report on behalf of:</b>	Councillor Andrew Williams (Leader of the Council)
<b>Part:</b>	I
<b>If Part II, reason:</b>	N/A
<b>Appendices:</b>	Nil
<b>Background papers:</b>	Nil
<b>Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:</b>	HTIP – Housing Transformation Improvement Programme HAP - Housing Action Plan

## Report Author / Responsible Officer

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<b>Corporate Priorities</b>	A clean, safe and enjoyable environment Building strong and vibrant communities Ensuring economic growth and prosperity Providing good quality affordable homes, in particular for those most in need Ensuring efficient, effective and modern service delivery Climate and ecological emergency
<b>Wards affected</b>	All
<b>Purpose of the report:</b>	To seek approval for a Chief Housing Officer (Tier 3) post within the Resident Services Directorate.

<b>Recommendation (s) to the decision maker (s):</b>	That Cabinet recommends:  1 That Council approves an additional post of Chief Housing Officer to be added to the establishment which will sit at Tier 3 within the Corporate Leadership Team  2 That Council approves a total budget for the post of up to £130,000 per annum.
<b>Period for post policy/project review:</b>	N/A

## 1. Introduction/Background:

- 1.1 The Housing Action Plan (HAP) for the Council's Housing Services was developed in the early part of 2021 across several key areas, ranging from Customer, Operations to IT, functional design, partner engagement and resident engagement. This set out the requirements for the housing service to accommodate legal changes in the national pipeline, as well as recover from the impact of the Pandemic. Additionally, there has been a significant drive across the Council to place the customer at the centre of service delivery and this needed to be better reflected in the Council's approach to the delivery of housing services
- 1.2 The HAP was designed to improve the way the service works for, and with customers, and it took an approach which essentially considered, People, Process, Place and Technical opportunities. The Strategic Leadership Team approved the planned service improvements on the 4<sup>th</sup> October 2021.
- 1.3 Following the themes identified in the HAP, subsequent detailed service reviews have identified further opportunities to improve business as usual operations, to put customers at the centre, to move faster on improvement opportunities and to consider whether the plan, albeit wide in scale, is genuinely addressing transformational opportunities that would deliver significant improvement in the outcomes we want to achieve for our residents. With this in mind a number of interventions are underway which address:
  - Business as usual
  - Improvement and
  - Transformation
- 1.4 A series of reviews have now been undertaken which consider an approach designed through Programme Management and Appreciative Inquiry to achieve a re-set of the Housing Service activities and delivery.
- 1.5 The theme of the programme reset is around "front door to back door" with the customer at its absolute centre. It also focuses on a place-based setting, to ensure that our housing neighbourhoods provide attractive and pleasant places in which to live. This means, firstly, that the programme outcomes are driven around how we make life better for Dacorum residents. Secondly these outcomes will be delivered more quickly, much more easily, digitally, where this works for residents, and through collaborative arrangements whereby they know and agree what outcomes will be delivered, by when, by who and how.
- 1.6 The programme now has a clear narrative that is understood, it has a clear schedule of activities and our customers can input into its development from a customer perspective.
- 1.7 As a part of latest work, the narrative has been around the three key areas mentioned above in order to help people begin to understand "where they are" in terms of the programme map. A quick and focused piece of work, for the purposes of the activity, called a Gateway Review, highlighted that there has been a trend which "projectised" activity which essentially was business as usual. Where there were genuine improvement activities and/or transformational opportunities, these became diluted, and the potential pace and grip required to gain momentum, (central to the programme approach), was not apparent. There is also an overall lack of project sponsorship, all of which can cause drift and a lack of direction. This is all, of course, resolvable, and activity is underway to reset the HAP into a Housing Improvement and Transformation Programme (HTIP).

- 1.8 One key strand of the newly created HTIP has focussed on staff resources and the Council is reviewing whether it has the right people with the rights skills working within the appropriate staffing structure.

## **2. Findings and Proposals**

- 2.1 The HTIP's early work has focused on reviewing staff resource and structures to ensure the Council has the appropriate leadership oversight and control of a very large housing stock of over 10,000 properties.
- 2.2 The Council's large housing stock is complex to manage and it is vital that that the leadership team has effective oversight of its operations to ensure that our customers are safe and live in good quality affordable homes, within attractive neighbourhoods.
- 2.3 The HTIP has quickly identified that there is a need for a greater oversight from the Council's current leadership team within the Residents Service Directorate.
- 2.4 It is therefore proposed that a new post of Chief Housing Officer is created at Tier 3 within the existing leadership team. This post will report into the Deputy Chief Executive Officer within the Residents Services Directorate. The early appointment to this role will also enable the post holder to continue to drive the excellent progress already achieved via the HTIP and can help shape future teams/structures to ensure a greater control over service delivery.
- 2.5 The new role will be responsible for all housing services across the Resident Services directorate and will be accountable for the delivery of the HTIP as well as ensuring performance is maintained/improved in line with Council expectations. The grade of the post is to be determined, but benchmarking and alignment with Council existing pay structures, suggest that it would attract a salary of up to £99,000 per annum. Reporting lines will also be determined before advertising the role.
- 2.6 The HTIP is a fast-paced delivery programme designed to bring significant change to Dacorum's housing service. As such, we will regularly review the make-up and structure of both the programme and service to ensure it is designed optimally. This is likely to result in further recommendations and advice in future months.

## **3. Options and alternatives considered**

- 3.1 Leaving the structure as it is, was an option that was considered. However, this was dismissed as it is considered that there is not enough leadership oversight and control of our housing stock given its size and complexity. The progression of the ambitious and necessary HTIP would also be at risk with the existing resource within the leadership team.
- 3.2 Consideration was also given to adapting the recent vacant post of Assistant Director – Housing Operations. This option was again dismissed on the grounds of level of leadership resource required to see the successful delivery of HTIP and the need to have greater control/oversight of the housing stock and improve service delivery on the ground.

## **4. Consultation**

The Strategic Leadership Team has been consulted and fully endorses this proposal. Finance, legal and HR teams have also been consulted on this proposal.

## **5. Financial and value for money implications:**

The Council needs to have the correct level of leadership resource and capability in the structure to ensure its housing stock is safe and suitable for tenants and leaseholders. This revised structure, and new Chief Housing Officer position, ensures the Council has the appropriate leadership oversight of its housing stock so that it can meet the Council's corporate objective of providing good quality affordable homes.

## **6. Legal Implications**

There are no direct legal implications associated with this paper.

## **7. Risk implications:**

7.1 A possible risk is that the Council cannot appoint to this new role. To mitigate this, we will ensure that a professional recruitment campaign is undertaken with the support from specialist recruitment consultants.

7.2 The recommendation to create a new post is mitigating risks identified by the HTIP in that there is insufficient leadership resource and capability to ensure the successful delivery of HTIP and having greater management control/oversight of the housing stock.

## **8. Equalities, Community Impact and Human Rights:**

8.1 Additional resource in the Housing service will help to improve the service which will benefit all areas of the community who require assistance from the service.

8.2 Human Rights – there are no Human Rights Implications arising from this report.

## **9. Sustainability implications (including climate change, health and wellbeing, community safety)**

The new post will lead on improving the health and wellbeing of our housing tenants by ensuring our properties and safe and are good quality affordable homes.

## **10. Council infrastructure (including Health and Safety, HR/OD, assets and other resources)**

10.1 This new post will play a leading role in making sure our health and safety obligations to our tenants are compliant with relevant law and guidance.

10.2 The Human Resources team will need to appropriately grade the new role and support with the recruitment process so that the Council can appoint a suitably qualified/experienced staff member.

## **11. Statutory Comments**

### **Monitoring Officer:**

The addition of a Chief Housing Officer post will provide a clear line of accountability and help to ensure that the Council meets all of its statutory requirements.

### **S151 Officer:**

The addition of a new Chief Housing Officer Post will require additional growth to the HRA housing management and supervision budget of up to £130k. In 2022/23 this will need to be taken from the Revenue contribution to capital as the HRA has a statutory requirement to show a self financing budget.

The impact of this role on other roles and structures in the Council will need to be carefully reviewed to ensure that this does not have an impact on general fund recharges and budgets, at this point in time this is not expected to impact on the general fund, if that changes further funding reports and decisions will be brought back to members.

The further reduction of the HRA revenue contribution to capital in 22/23 reduces the HRA's funds that are available to invest in future capital works. The ongoing baseline pressure this creates in the HRA going forward will have to be carefully assessed as part of the HRA 2023/24 budget setting and longer term 30 year HRA business plan.

## **12. Conclusions:**

It is absolutely critical that the Council continues to drive the excellent progress already achieved via the HTIP and has the right leadership capacity in the future to ensure a greater control over service delivery. This new role will be fundamental to the success of this and will ensure that we can continue to provide good quality affordable homes to our tenants and leaseholders.