

Report of the Director

Disabled Facilities Grant Service

1 Purpose of report

- 1.1 To update members on preparations for the delivery of the home improvement agency service to ensure a smooth transition of the service as it is brought in house from April 2019.
- 1.2 To seek approval for the staffing structure and associated costs of an expanded private sector housing team to include the additional officers required to deliver the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) service in house.

2 Executive summary

- 2.1 Bringing the home improvement service back in house from the current provider, Care and Repair (Spire Homes) is planned to take place on 1 April 2019.
- 2.2 The new service model assumes the transfer of one full time technical officer role from Spire Homes under TUPE arrangements, and the creation of a new part time case worker role added to the establishment.
- 2.3 The delivery of DFGs and associated home improvement agency services will be delivered by environmental health team. This forms part of a wider restructure of environmental and housing services which will be reviewed in June 2019.
- 2.4 The costs for this proposal are marginally higher than that associated with the current model and are fully funded within the capital programme for the delivery of DFG applications.
- 2.5 The in-house arrangements will enable a review of procedures and working practices which will deliver better customer service and capacity to meet need and take up of our DFG allocation.
- 2.6 The other north Northamptonshire councils already deliver this service in house and together we are looking to harmonise policies and working practices.

3 Appendices

Appendix 1 Staffing structure for delivering the DFG service

4 Proposed action:

- 4.1 **The Committee is invited to RECOMMEND approval of the revised establishment and staffing structure to deliver the DFG service in-house from 1 April 2019.**

5 Background

- 5.1 The Council currently has a service level agreement with Care and Repair (Spire Homes) to provide a home improvement agency (HIA) service.
- 5.2 Resources committee in March 2018 agreed that the fee paid to Care and Repair would be increased to 15% of the net build cost per job to be met through the DFG capital grant budget until March 2019. The government grant allocation for the Council in 2018/19 is £540,709.
- 5.3 At resources committee in June 2018 it was agreed that the home improvement agency service would be brought back in house from April 2019 for the Council to deliver.
- 5.4 In October 2018, it was approved by an urgent action request to change the method for paying Care and Repair for their delivery of this service to a monthly payment of £5000 instead of 15% per completed case for the remaining period; 1st October 2018 until 31 March 2019. Members agreed this to ensure a smooth transition of the Disabled Facilities Grant service prior to the service coming back in house.
- 5.5 Care and Repair also received funding from Northamptonshire County Council to cover the cost of completing 'Healthy Homes Assessments' for residents. 'Healthy Homes Assessments' are not a statutory function but the member of staff employed part time by Care and Repair to complete these assessments also completed casework for DFGs. This NCC funding ended in September 2018 and consequently the 0.5FTE support worker role was no longer funded. The switch to a payment of £5000 ensured that this role was funded until April 2019 as it is crucial in the delivery of DFGs.

6 Discussion

- 6.1 The current service model is delivered by staff at both BCW and Spire Homes Care and Repair. Across both organisations there is currently the equivalent of 2.8 FTE staff delivering this service. This is further detailed in Appendix 1. The proposed structure assumes some operating efficiencies through the delivery of service by one organisation; for instance less handover between staff across organisations making the service quicker for the customer through effective communication and approval processes. This enables a revised staffing structure of 2.6 FTE staff to deliver in the service in-house.
- 6.3 Under the current agreement we pay Care and Repair £5,000 per month which calculates annual costs equivalent to £60,000 per annum.
- 6.4 Bringing this service back in-house from April 2019 is being managed alongside the management realignment of the private sector housing function, moving from the housing team to environmental health team for an initial trial period and subject to review in June 2019.

- 6.5 The DFG application process will be reviewed early in 2019 and streamlined to ensure efficient working practices and great customer service is delivered.
- 6.6 We anticipate the proposed structure and revised working procedures will enable more grant applications to be delivered for a greater number of customers in need of adaptations which is likely to see a larger take up of DFG grant allocation.

7 Legal powers

Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 (as amended)
Localism Act 2011.

8 Financial and value for money implications

- 8.1 The technical officer role will move across to BCW (under TUPE arrangements) with a current salary of £33,687.64. The case worker role is a new role in the establishment with an assumed pro rata salary of £21,127.50.
- 8.2 All direct salary costs will be taken from the DFG capital budget.
- 8.3 The total annual cost for running the service in house is estimated to be £65,785. This includes a small revenue reserve; and is marginally more expensive, £5,785, than the current arrangement with Care and Repair which has previously been reported as being delivered at marginal cost.
- 8.4 However, this in-house arrangement will provide a more efficient and responsive service for customers and enable BCW to help more customers in need of adaptations.
- 8.5 The cost will be fully funded through from the DFG capital budget and there will be no net effect on the council's revenue budget ,unless there are abortive works which we cannot cover through the DFG grant; for prudence we have set aside a small revenue reserve budget of £2k for such eventualities.

9 Risk analysis

Nature of risk	Consequences	Likelihood	Control measures
Failure to provide an effective HIA service	Customers needs not met. Staff unable to cope with the demand for DFG and statutory duties.	Likely	Streamline procedures.
Inadequate capital resources to meet BCW`s statutory obligation to approve DFGs	Local residents in need of adaptations will not receive them – increased accidents and injury, need for hospitalisation, blocking of beds and residential care.	Unlikely	Ensure adequate resource levels to provide an effective HIA service. Allocation of adequate budget to meet demand for DFG.

10 Implications for resources

- 10.1 Proposals for staffing protect the TUPE requirements of one individual. The proposed staffing structure provides capacity to meet existing service demand with capacity for delivering more DFG applications.
- 10.2 Consultation has taken place with the Technical Officer subject to the TUPE transfer and he is comfortable with this change. Existing staff have been consulted about this change, and there are no issues of concern which affect this proposal. Consultation will take place with Unison on the implementation of this change.

11 Implications for stronger and safer communities

The provision of a HIA service ensures people can remain in their homes, reducing the incidences of hospital stays, and supports their sustainable and successful return home. Providing adaptation services reduces the demand for allocation of new homes and the provision of intensive care and support in residential care settings and demand on other services.

12 Implications for equalities

The provision of an effective service to support applications for disabled facilities grant enabling local residents to maintain their independence has a positive impact on equalities within the Borough.

13 Author and contact officer

Mark Lowthian, Senior Project Manager

14 Consultees

Liz Elliott, Managing Director

Julie Thomas, Director (Place and Strategic Growth)

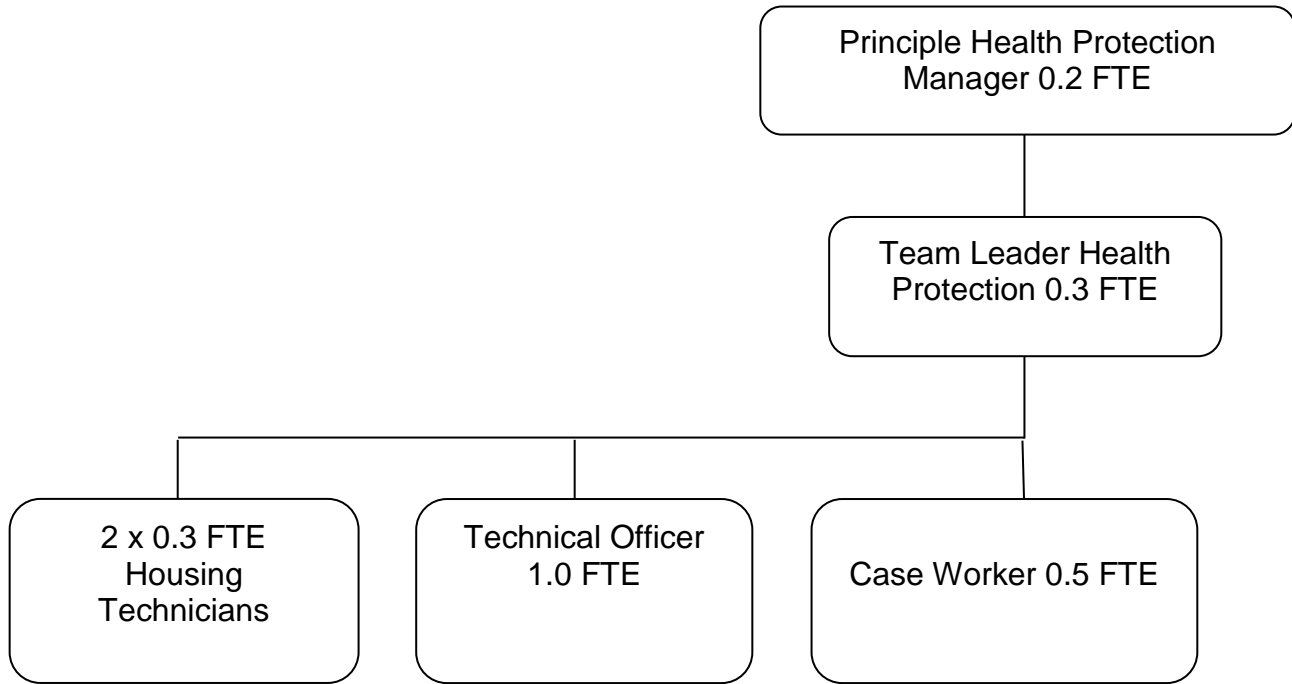
Vicki Jessop, Assistant Director (Place and Strategic Growth)

Julie O'Connell, Finance Manager

Lorraine Coleman, Senior Human Resources Officer

15 Background papers Not applicable

Appendix 1 DFG Service Staffing Chart



Current Structure

Within BCW
 Principle Health Protection Manager 0.2 FTE
 Team Leader (Health Protection) 0.3 FTE
 2 x Housing Technician 0.6 FTE

Within Spire Homes
 Care & Repair Manager 0.2 FTE
 Technical Officer 1.0 FTE
 Caseworker 0.5 FTE

Total Staff = 2.8 FTE

Proposed Structure in BCW
 Principle Health Protection Manager 0.2 FTE
 Team Leader (Health Protection) 0.3 FTE
 2 x Housing Technician 0.6 FTE
 Technical Officer 1.0 FTE
 Case Worker 0.5 FTE

Total staff = 2.6 FTE

