

**Bolsover District Council**

**Council**

**24th May 2023**

**Housing Options Manager Post**

**Report of the Head of Housing Management and Enforcement**

<b>Classification</b>	This report is public
<b>Report By</b>	Victoria Dawson, Head of Housing Management and Enforcement, 01246 242231
<b>Contact Officer</b>	Victoria Dawson, Head of Housing Management and Enforcement, 01246 242231

**PURPOSE/SUMMARY OF REPORT**

- To seek approval to create a permanent Housing Options Manager post.
- To recommend to Council for the General Fund revenue budget associated with the establishment of the permanent post.

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**REPORT DETAILS**

**1. Background**

- 1.1 The Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homeless Reduction Act 2017 places statutory duties on Local Authorities to intervene at earlier stages to prevent homelessness in their areas. It also requires Housing Authorities to provide homelessness services to all those affected, not just those who have 'priority need'. These include:
- (a) an enhanced prevention duty extending the period a household is threatened with homelessness from 28 days to 56 days, meaning that housing authorities are required to work with people to prevent homelessness at an earlier stage; and
  - (b) a new duty for those who are already homeless so that housing authorities will support households for 56 days to relieve their homelessness by helping them to secure accommodation.

- 1.2 The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 amends Part 7 of the 1996 Act to strengthen the support available to victims of domestic abuse. The Act extends priority need to all eligible victims of domestic abuse who are homeless as a result of being a victim of domestic abuse. The 2021 Act brings in a new definition of domestic abuse which housing authorities must follow to assess whether an applicant is homeless as a result of being a victim of domestic abuse.
- 1.3 Local Housing Authorities report their homelessness activities under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 to The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, by completing the quarterly H-CLIC statistical return. H-CLIC is an upload of all cases about statutory homelessness and the authority's activities within the legislative framework.
- 1.4 The Council does not have a stand-alone homeless team, rather the 4 "patch" based Housing Needs Officers have homelessness as a part of their wide role. They are currently split 60% HRA and 40% GF but this split is not reflective of the work they currently undertaking. We are in the process of collating information to accurately record the time spent on these two distinct areas however it is very clear more time is spent on homelessness.
- 1.5 We have seen a significant increase in the amount of homeless approaches we receive as shown below and an increase in the complexity of these cases.
- 1.6 The table below shows the HCLIC data we report to the government each quarter and shows the increase in assessed case, in recent years. Please note we have more approaches but some are resolved within the need for full assessments.

Year	19-20	20-21	21-22	22-23 ( up to December 22)
<b>Total assessed</b>	116	98	233	306

## 2. **Details of Proposal or Information**

- 2.1 We are seeking to create a permanent post of Housing Options Manager to lead the Homelessness Team. In addition to the increase in the volume of cases, the complexities are also taking more time to consider, process, explain and record.
- 2.2 These decisions can be subject to Judicial Review. Training has been, and will continue to be provided to staff, however, there is need for an experienced Housing Options Manager to make complex decisions and offer support and assistance to the Housing Needs Officers.
- 2.3 The data and trends in the private rented sectors suggests that private landlords are leaving the market and the private rented sector is shrinking. People are struggling with housing costs, including rent, utilities and the rising costs of food. The reality is we are likely to continue to see a rise in homelessness cases.

- 2.4 The new post will also give more capacity and experience to investigate cases to ensure applications are genuine and that robust decisions are made.
- 2.5 Following the appointment of an experienced Housing Options Manager, the team structure will be reviewed to ensure it is fit for purpose to deliver the Council's statutory duties.
- 2.6 The post has been through job evaluation and is Grade 9, this with on-costs is a starting costs of £53,967. This report seeks to obtain approval for this post to become a permanent post on the establishment and for the additional budget to be met from the General Fund.

### **3. Reasons for Recommendation**

- 3.1 The increase in homelessness within the District means we need to make some difficult, yet robust decisions which have the potential to be subject to legal challenge. A Housing Options Manager, with the skills and expertise in this area would enhance the team, build confidence and lead a Homelessness Team through the challenges we are facing.

### **4 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection**

- 4.1 There are alternatives which could be considered:

To do nothing, however this is not considered appropriate we do not have sufficient staffing resources to deliver the statutory duties at this time.

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### **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

1. To approve a new full time permanent Housing Options Manger on the establishment, to be funded by the General Fund.
2. To approve a revenue budget increase of £53,967 to the General Fund.

#### **IMPLICATIONS:**

**Finance and Risk:**            Yes ☒            No ☐

**Details:** The cost to the General Fund would be £53,967 per annum, subject to any pay awards and increments.

On behalf of the Section 151 Officer

**Legal (including Data Protection):**            Yes ☒            No ☐

**Details:** All legal requirements are set out within the body of the report.

On behalf of the Solicitor to the Council

**Environment:** Yes ☐ No ☒

Please identify (if applicable) how this proposal/report will help the Authority meet its carbon neutral target or enhance the environment. Please speak to the Climate Change lead officer for further advice.

**Details:** There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

**Staffing:** Yes ☒ No ☐

**Details:** Any recruitment will follow the Council's recruitment policies and procedures.

On behalf of the Head of Paid Service

## DECISION INFORMATION

<b>Is the decision a Key Decision?</b> A Key Decision is an executive decision which has a significant impact on two or more District wards or which results in income or expenditure to the Council above the following thresholds:  <b>Revenue - £75,000</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Capital - £150,000</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Please indicate which threshold applies</i>	No
<b>Is the decision subject to Call-In?</b> (Only Key Decisions are subject to Call-In)	No

<b>District Wards Significantly Affected</b>	N/A
<b>Consultation:</b> <b>Leader / Deputy Leader</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Executive</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>SLT</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Relevant Service Manager</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Members</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Public</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Other</b> <input type="checkbox"/>	Details:

### Links to Council Ambition: Customers, Economy and Environment.

Providing good quality council housing where people choose to live

Promoting equality and diversity and supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged people

<b>DOCUMENT INFORMATION</b>	
<b>Appendix No</b>	<b>Title</b>
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<b>Background Papers</b>
<i>(These are unpublished works which have been relied on to a material extent when preparing the report. They must be listed in the section below. If the report is going to Executive you must provide copies of the background papers).</i>
None