

To: City Executive Board

Date: 9th June 2010 **Item No:**

Report of: Executive Director City Services

Title of Report: Council Reorganisation – Council 2012

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To inform about the reorganisation of the Council and to provide more details on structures and key issues and to include initial consultation with trade unions, staff and tenants.

Key decision: Yes

Executive lead member: Councillor Bob Price
Councillor Oscar van Nooijen
Councillor Joe McManners
Councillor Antonia Bance

Report approved by:

Finance: Jackie Yates
Legal: Jeremy Thomas

Policy Framework: Medium Term Financial Strategy,
Corporate Plan

Recommendation(s):

The City Executive Board is recommended to agree:-

- 1) That the 'Council 2012' programme be approved and that the Chief Executive be authorised to implement any changes to operational and management structures in support of the programme (including, but not limited to, the structural changes set out in this report) subject to further consultation and engagement with Members, tenants and other stakeholders in relation to the organisation of the 'landlord' functions
- 2) That the Chief Executive be requested to report to the next ordinary meeting of Council in relation to the changes made to the senior management structure as a consequence of the specific proposals within this report and to future meetings of Council in relation to any other changes made to the senior

management structure as a consequence of the delegation given to the Chief Executive by recommendation (1) above to implement the 'Council 2012' programme.

3) That political groups be invited to nominate Members to sit on a steering group to guide the 'service offer' and 'community engagement' aspects of the ongoing implementation and delivery of the programme.

1. Introduction

1.1 Following the decision to retain the recycling and waste service in house and consideration of the views of the Corporate Management Team on the steps necessary to secure delivery of the in-house comparator and other savings identified in the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), the previous meeting of the City Executive Board approved in principle certain organisational changes and asked for a further report. That report would provide more details on structures and key issues and to include initial consultation with trade unions, staff and tenants.

2. Background and supporting information

2.1 Since the report in April, the national election has resulted in a coalition Government formed by the Conservative and Liberal Democratic parties.

2.2 The new Government has confirmed its intention to make substantial reductions in public sector funding and make reductions earlier than planned by the previous Government. In year reduction of £6 billion have been confirmed with an emergency budget on June 22nd and a spending review in the autumn of 2010 aimed at accelerating the deficit reduction programme. The Government's intention to freeze Council Tax rises in 2011/12 has also been confirmed without any additional funding to help Councils to achieve this cap.

2.3 These events have hardened the view of the Corporate Management Team that we need to act swiftly and decisively to deliver the savings already relied on in the MTFS and to identify further transformation savings to minimise the need to make unplanned cuts to services, which would impact on the people and businesses of the city and detract from the Council's aims and corporate plan objectives.

2.4 The CMT have labelled the coordinated set of actions "Council 2012" – with the ambition through these actions to reduce expenditure by 20% whilst achieving improvement in service outcomes by 20%. This aim reflects the Corporate Plan and its objective to transform the Council by reducing costs whilst improving services. The 20% target reflects the broad savings assumptions in the MTFS, the improvements achieved in the Fundamental Service Reviews and because that is judged to be a challenging but achievable target. We feel that bringing these strands together under the banner of "Council 2012" communicates the scale and urgency of the changes required. Council 2010 whilst ambitious is in fact a means to an end.

It seeks to manage the savings required whilst protecting services and the core aims and objectives of the corporate plan.

3. What has happened since the last meeting?

3.1 Since the last meeting, a core group of officers has been formed comprising the Chief Executive, Directors and Head of People and Equalities. The role of this core group is to review and approve at officer level all proposals relating to the proposed organisational changes.

3.2 The core group is supported by a wider group of heads of service who have drawn up the detailed proposals contained in this report.

3.3 A number of briefings and discussions have taken place with trade unions, staff and tenant representatives.

3.4 A strong consensus has formed amongst the heads of service that the direction of travel proposed for Council 2012 which can be exemplified by the headlines set out below is the right direction and that whilst there are potential pitfalls and challenges, suitable ways around them can be found and implemented.

3.5 Those headlines are:-

- One Council
- Rationalise our buildings and sweat our assets
- Simplify, standardise and automate processes
- Modern and flexible working practices

3.6 The heads of service have drawn up proposals for blocks of services and how they would be organised. They have also worked collaboratively to set out how we would deal with the most contentious issues arising out of the proposals identified by ourselves, members, staff and tenants.

- Establishing research, service and policy development and commissioning work and operational delivery without client/contractor splits
- Providing a One Council approach to delivery of services to tenants whilst maintaining a holistic housing landlord function which relates to tenants and that tenants can relate to
- Improving tenant and community engagement on estates where a large proportion of the occupiers are tenants but not necessarily of the city council.
- Improving efficiency and control over income collection whilst providing a service which responsive to the commissioning service and its customers
- Ensuring the future of estate management reflects changes in the nature of estates, our relationship with tenants, the impact of changes arising from the Supporting People agenda and the challenges of antisocial behaviour

- Bringing together contact services into one, more efficient team whilst building strong relationships with provider services and their customers.

3.7 We are very much aware that changes such as those proposed, if not well designed and delivered, could result in service provision and relationships with customers and tenants which are efficient, but at the same time are perceived to be cold and impersonal. We do not want to lose the strong sense of connection between the public and the Council and will be paying extra attention to this risk as we implement the changes. Central to this is the shift to a One Council culture which recognises that our tenants are tenants of the council, not a particular department or service and all staff and members have a shared responsibility to understand and meet the needs of those tenants. The same paradigm shift has to be achieved for all the other relationships that the council has with customers and stakeholders. We propose that tenants have their own dedicated relationship managers, called Tenant Advisors who will be available to resolve complaints or problems which are non-routine, as well as ensuring new tenants are welcomed and briefed on our services.

4. Organisational Proposals

4.1 Our proposals in respect of the principles approved at the previous meeting of the City Executive Board are set out below. This information is supplemented by the diagrams of the organisation of structure at head of service level and the arrangement of blocks of services shown in Appendix 1 and 2.

Form a single Direct Services Team including recycling and waste, street scene, highways and engineering, and building maintenance – with all services reporting through trading accounts overseen by a Commercial Services Board

4.2 All stakeholders have expressed a concern over the need to avoid a return to a hard client/ contractor split that was often a disruptive aspect arising from internal markets, under the Compulsory Competitive Tendering regime. Our proposal is to form both “intelligent” commissioning and provider functions. By this, we mean that we believe that whilst it is important that there is a resource available to focus on policy, strategy and funding separated out from and holding to account the provider arm, that provider arm should have the freedom to plan its own work.

4.3 The expectations of and budget for the provider function would be identified through the MTFs and service planning process. The work of the commissioning arm would set out a three year view of the likely work to be required of the provider function and set through the budget process the outcomes and budget for the coming year. The budget would then be delegated to the provider function, who would then manage their service to optimise those outcomes within the available budget for which they would be accountable, through trading accounts and rigorous performance management, to the commissioning arm.

4.4 Currently we see two options for the location of car parking services. The first is leaving this service with the other former City Works services in the direct service team. The second is to transfer the service to be run along side other revenue services. This would potentially strengthen the management capacity to deliver the improvements in the revenues area.

4.5 Through this approach, we believe that we can create the best environment for thriving internally provided services which meet the aims of the Council in a cost effective manner.

Moving to a single depot and stores operation to support the Direct Services team

4.6 Oxford City Homes and Oxford City Works currently occupy separate depots at Horspath and Cowley Marsh. There is the opportunity through combining stores operations and better utilisation of space to move to a single depot operation. This may be at either of the two existing depot sites or a new site preferably with good access to the ring road.

4.7 We intend to complete a feasibility study and business case to make a recommendation on the best way forward by September this year. That would enable us to move to a single depot operation in 2012 with the release for sale of surplus accommodation.

4.8 A move away from the Horspath location would raise the question of the Tenants' Resource Centre. We recognise the need to maintain a resource centre and the views of the tenants' representatives on its location as set out below. We will commence a site search for a replacement resource centre which is unlikely to be at the new depot location.

Moving the non-maintenance delivery elements of the housing landlord function to a new combined Housing and Communities Team.

4.9 Clearly we could simply transfer the existing landlord function teams from Oxford City Homes to the Community Housing and Development service area, organised as they are. However, to do so would miss an opportunity to address the changing nature of issues on our estates which are increasingly characterised by mixed tenure, fail to optimise the synergy between General Fund and Housing Revenue Account funded activities and to make efficiency savings. Improvements in our information, communications and management systems and management across the Council make new more cost effective ways of working feasible.

4.10 We believe that it is imperative to form a strong, easily recognised landlord function which relates to tenants and tenants can relate to. We therefore propose a new post of Landlord Services Manager to replace the existing Tenancy Operations Manager. This post would hold the day-to-day responsibility for the landlord function and support the head of service in advising members and tenants regarding policy and service options. They

would coordinate all of the services provided to tenants by other services such as property, direct services and customer services to ensure that service standards are maintained and that tenants receive good value for money.

4.11 The post would also supervise a team that provides a clear point of contact for tenants for advice, advocacy and support in accessing services of the Council and other partners.

4.12 We feel that there would be advantages from combining the existing tenant involvement team with the communities and neighbourhoods team. This would strengthen our engagement on our key estates with more of a focus on capacity building and breaking the cycle of deprivation. Existing core tenant involvement functions would be protected providing overall an enhanced service to tenants of the city council and other residents on our estates alike.

4.13 The details behind these proposals are set out in the paper by Graham Stratford set out in Appendix 5.

4.14 In respect of rent collection, we propose combining this function with all other revenue functions such as Council Tax collection, with a view to realising efficiencies and an improving the control environment. Close cooperation would be required between the revenues team and the landlord functions. Systems and processes will be reviewed to ensure they are streamlined and fit for purpose.

4.15 We propose that we engage stakeholders on these proposals, looking at how best to organise the transferring functions to optimise outcomes and efficiencies in the light of the tenure mixes on our estates, the high needs of some households on those estates and the desire to regenerate for the future and break the cycle of deprivation rather than solely seeking short term fixes to today's problems.

Combining the maintenance and property related functions of Oxford City Homes with the Asset Management function

4.16 The Heads of Oxford City Homes, Asset Management and Community Housing have been tasked with detailing how this would work in practice and agree a division of responsibilities and resources around repairs and maintenance for our housing stock. Their conclusion is confirmed in the paper from the Head of Oxford City Homes attached as Appendix 4.

Combining the contact centre operations currently within Oxford City Homes with the Customer Services Team, creating one generic front of house and call centre service.

4.17 We are proposing that the current contact centre at Horspath serving Oxford City Homes and City Works is merged with the one in the city centre which now serves revenues and benefits and will shortly provide telephone customer contact supported by our customer relationship management system for Environmental and City Development. We are on schedule to

launch our one number system from July 2010 but propose to continue to provide the free phone number for tenants, which would direct them into the landlord service areas of the contact centre. Experience elsewhere shows conclusively that there is a steep economy of scale curve for contact services. It is likely that the new joint contact centre would be located on the ground floor of St Aldate's Chambers.

4.18 Our implementation of these changes would focus on providing a seamless customer focused view of the Council and the services we offer. We intend to maximise the efficiencies available through modern, collaborative ways of working whilst maintaining a sense of connection and common interest between those who use our services and the council will also be a focus by ensuring that we also provide accessible walk in centres in the city centre and Temple Cowley as well as enhancing home visits for those who would otherwise struggle to access our services.

Forming a commissioning unit reporting to the Executive Director City Services for all services provided by the Direct Service operation

4.19 With the transfer of functions to the Corporate Assets and to the Housing and Communities service areas it only remains to form a separate commissioning unit for the former city works areas – recycling and waste, street scene etc. The focus of this group will be strategy policy and external partnerships such as the Oxfordshire Waste Partnership.

Move administrative transactions and processing functions currently within City Works and Oxford City Homes into a combined corporate shared services units for Finance and People & Equalities.

4.20 This work stream is designed to speed up progress under the existing programme of Modernising Corporate Services. Whilst we are currently focusing on City Works and City Homes the same principles apply across the organisation. This is likely to prove the most beneficial area in terms of efficiency savings. We shall also examine support services such as performance management, specifying what is best carried out in a coordinated way at the centre and what the expectations are of service areas.

5. Timetable

5.1 The core group and heads of service have reviewed the timetables and interactions between existing change programmes, such as Offices for the Future and these organisational proposals. A headline indicative timetable has been drawn up which is shown in Appendix 3. This shows members the interaction between the various programmes which needs to be carefully managed if we are to realise the benefits of the change programme, including the savings relied upon in the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

6. Management of the Change

6.1 The proposed changes will be managed using the Council's programme and project management methodologies. In addition, due the complexity of the co-ordination of the programmes required to deliver success, the

Executive Director for City Services will take up the role of co-ordinating the whole portfolio of programmes, communicating with stakeholders and reporting progress to the Corporate Management Team and members.

7. Consultations

7.1 A series of consultation meetings have been held with trade unions. Broadly, the unions support the proposed approach recognising the challenges facing the Council. Concerns remain about the communication with staff about proposals, how they will affect individuals, the need to avoid compulsory redundancies and around the issues identified above. Approving this report will enable the senior management to engage staff, trade unions, tenants and other stakeholders in the next level of detail around these proposals.

7.2 Heads of Service support the proposals and have been actively engaged in coming up with the details that support this report. The wider Management Practice Group of all managers across the organisation has been briefed on the need for change, the proposals and the alternative. The alternative, in light of the scale of savings likely to be required over the next 3-5 years, we see as being a return to savings achieved through top slicing services, a lack of investment in people, buildings and systems leading to an impoverished organisation susceptible to unplanned cuts and redundancies.

7.3 A meeting with tenant's representatives has been held on the changes approved in principle at the last meeting, to provide reassurance around the Council's continuing commitment to its landlord function and tenant involvement, and to seek views on issues of concern from a tenant's perspective. The representatives supported the prompt action of the council to meet reductions in budgets through transformation and efficiencies rather than cuts, and identified a number of issues of concern to be taken into account.

7.4 These issues centred on maintenance of an effective repairs service, continued resourcing of the tenant involvement process and support to tenants and the continuing need for a resource centre preferably located with the landlord function. The representative's expressed concerns about the city centre as a location for the resource centre. They were also concerned that without a single department dealing with landlord functions and the needs of tenants, there was a danger that the council would lose its focus on their needs. We believe that we will address this need through the Tenancy Advisors and its support, advice and advocacy roles.

7.5 Council 2012 is an ambitious programme with implications across the organisation. In this report we have set out the direction and next level of detail. However, it is recognised that there remains much to resolve, many questions and concerns to be answered. Much of this can only be achieved as we more fully engage with stakeholders. As part of this process it is proposed that we supplement the current arrangements for engaging members in the various programmes and projects making up Council 2012 by forming an informal steering group of members which will guide the 'service

offer' and 'community engagement' aspects of the ongoing implementation and delivery of the programme.

8. Financial Issues

8.1 The CMT estimate that, whilst we have not yet derived detailed structures and budgets, it would not be unreasonable to expect savings of around £1m pa revenue from Council 2012, £0.5m more than there is currently relied on in the MTFS. In addition a substantial capital receipt would be achieved.

8.2 At face value what is proposed is far more complex than current arrangements in respect of accounting for income and expenditure under the housing revenue account (HRA). However, there is at present a complex arrangement of support charges between the general fund and the HRA. Whilst it is clearly in the interests of tenants to have all expenditure correctly accounted for to the HRA it is largely an internal accounting process with very clear rules and procedures and the Council is free to organise itself in the most efficient way. We believe that the savings produced for both the general fund and the HRA by these proposals far outweighs any technical internal accounting issues.

9. Equalities

9.1 The changes proposed, focus on how the Council organises itself rather than policy changes. However, it is recognised that in practice unintended consequences may flow if these are not recognised and mitigated. Therefore, equalities impacts assessments will be carried out at service level as part of the detail planning of structures.

Staffing Issues

9.2 It is anticipated that around 30-35 staff posts could be saved, primarily in support roles through the implementation of Council 2012. As with previous changes, the Council's Organisational Change Policy would be applied to ensure fair treatment of those affected. In practice, we expect that the combination of vacancy planning, turnover, early and phased retirements and voluntary redundancies will obviate the necessity for compulsory redundancies.

10. Conclusions

10.1 Particularly bearing in mind the changing external environment, which may see cuts in local government funding at district level climbing to 30-40% and the council's capacity to transform itself, the Corporate Management Team are convinced that the radical changes proposed in the Council 2012 programme are both desirable and necessary. The alternative is to balance the budget through service cuts and reductions in investment, which would lead to an impoverished organisation susceptible to unplanned cuts and redundancies. It is for these reasons that the CMT are recommending these substantial changes in the way in which the council is organised and operates delivering the required savings through transforming how we deliver the Council's objectives and protecting front line services.

11. Recommendation(s):

11.1 The City Executive Board is recommended to agree :-

1) That the 'Council 2012' programme be approved and that the Chief Executive be authorised to implement any changes to operational and management structures in support of the programme (including, but not limited to, the structural changes set out in this report) subject to further consultation and engagement with Members, tenants and other stakeholders in relation to the organisation of the 'landlord' functions

2) That the Chief Executive be requested to report to the next ordinary meeting of Council in relation to the changes made to the senior management structure as a consequence of the specific proposals within this report and to future meetings of Council in relation to any other changes made to the senior management structure as a consequence of the delegation given to the Chief Executive by recommendation (1) above to implement the 'Council 2012' programme.

3) That political groups be invited to nominate Members to sit on a steering group to guide the 'service offer' and 'community engagement' aspects of the ongoing implementation and delivery of the programme.

Name and contact details of author:

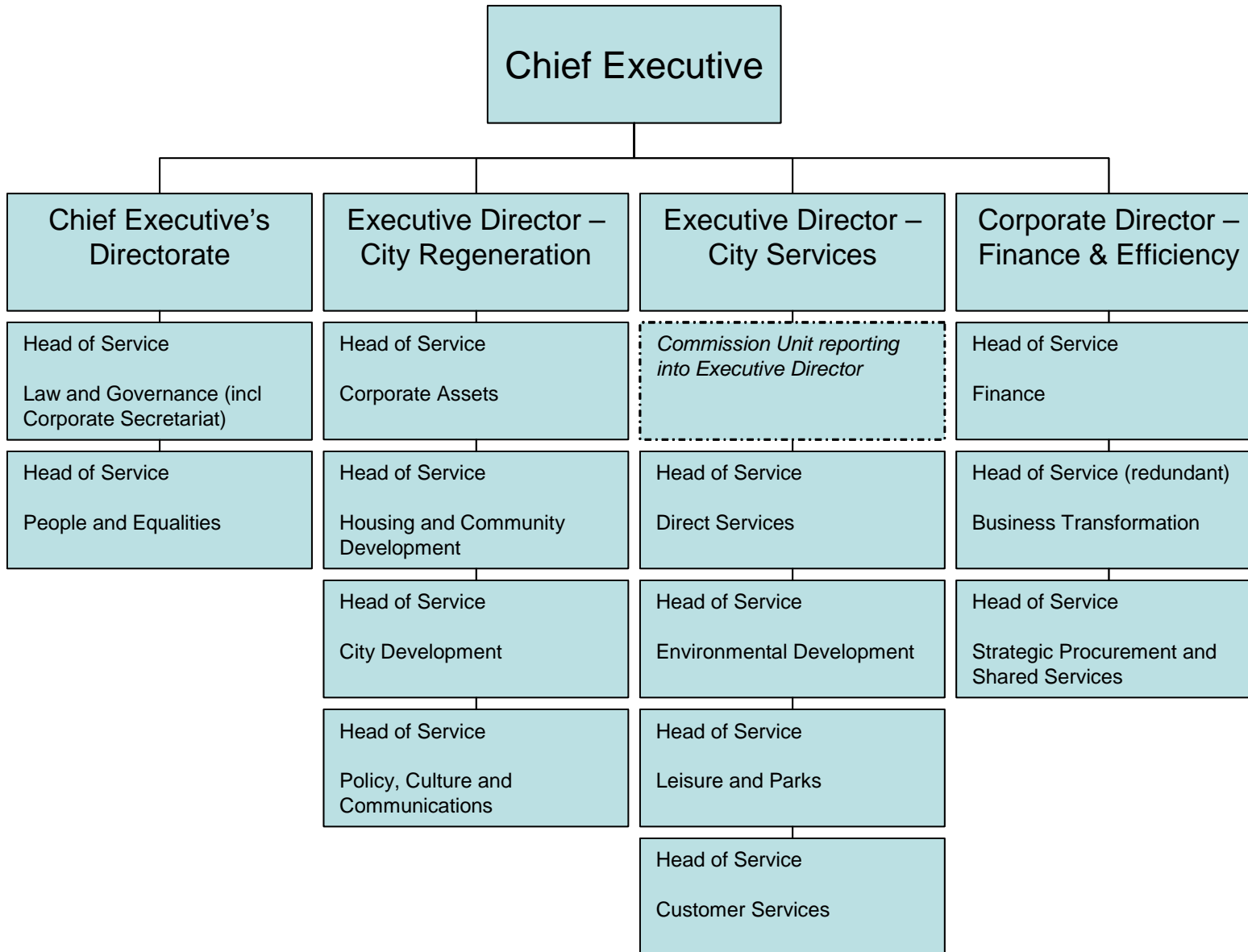
**Tim Sadler 01865 252101
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List of background papers:

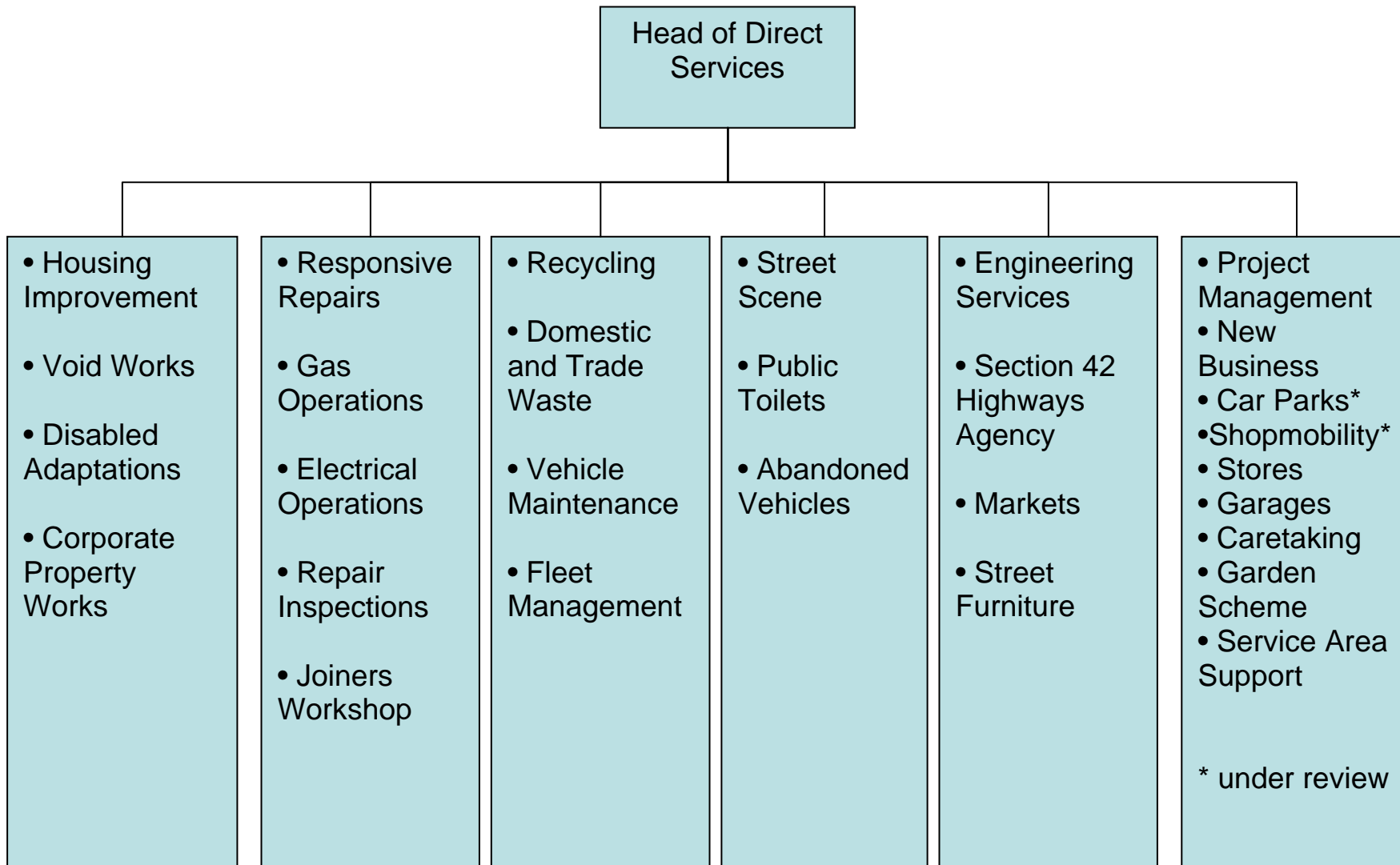
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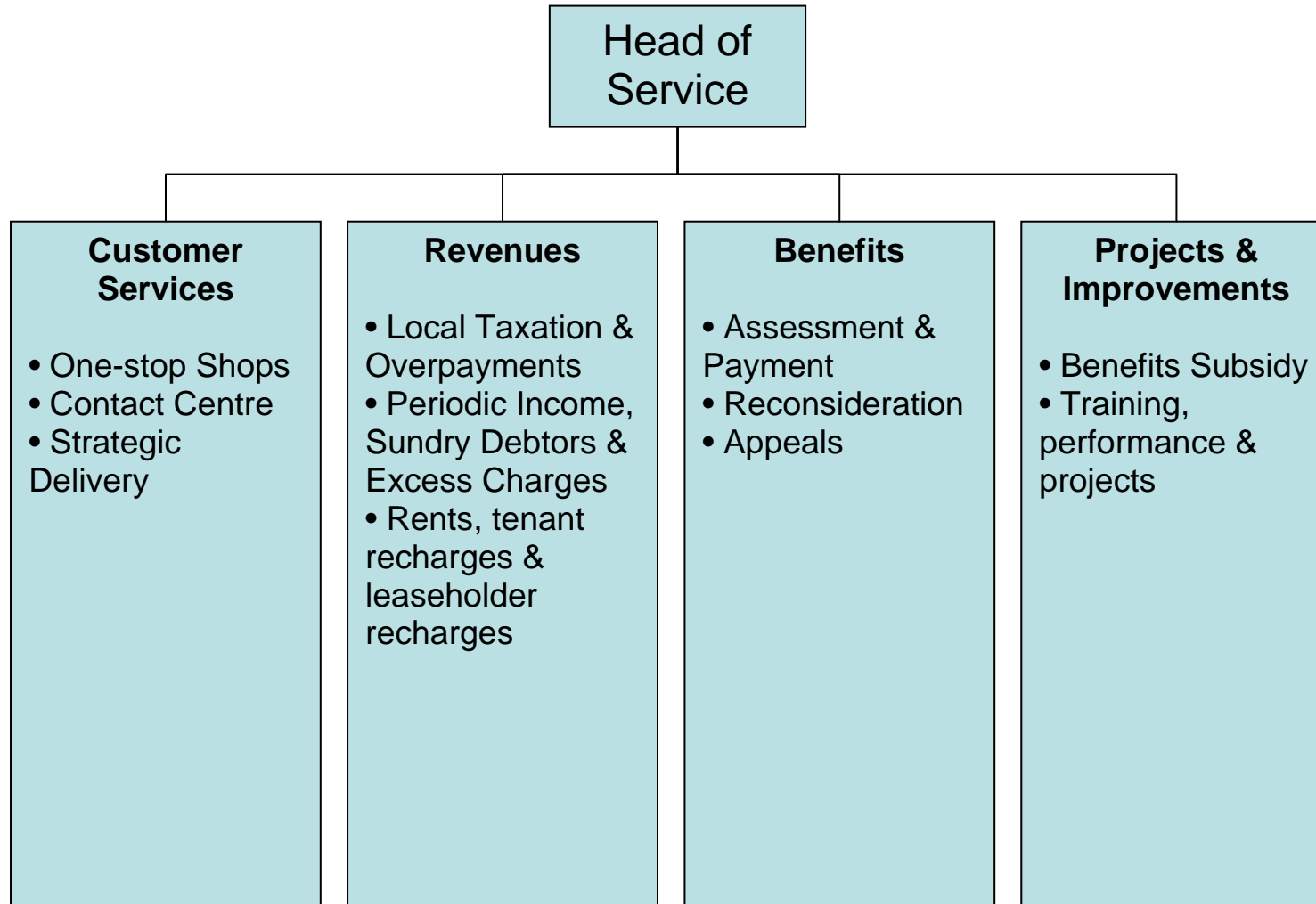
**APPENDIX 1
REVISED STRUCTURE
MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE**



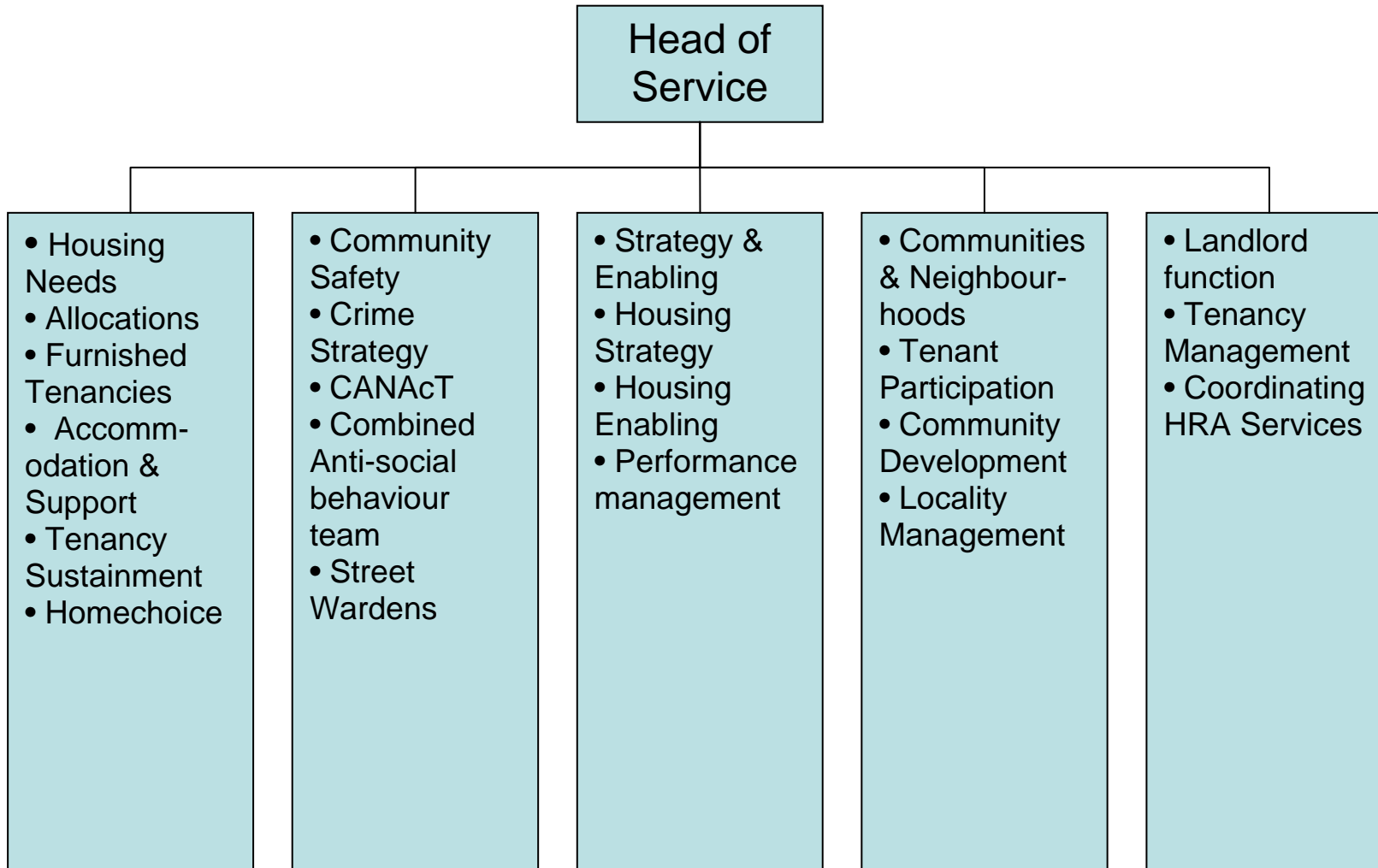
**APPENDIX 2A
PROPOSED FUNCTIONAL STRUCTURE
DIRECT SERVICES**



**APPENDIX 2B
CUSTOMER SERVICES
PROPOSED FUNCTIONAL STRUCTURE**

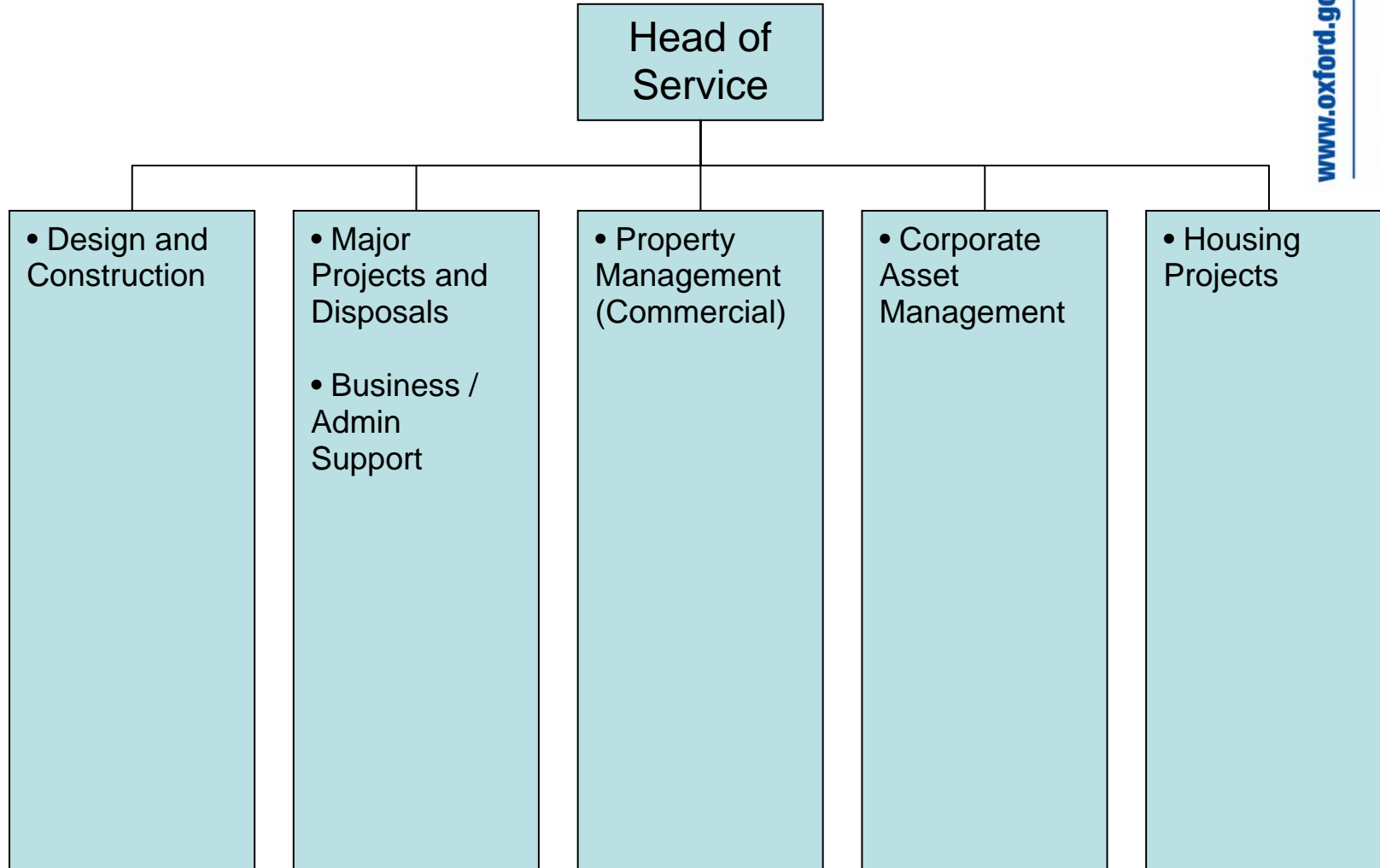


**APPENDIX 2C
COMMUNITY & HOUSING DEVELOPMENT
PROPOSED FUNCTIONAL STRUCTURE**



APPENDIX 2D

Corporate Assets PROPOSED FUNCTIONAL STRUCTURE



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APPENDIX 3 – timetable see separate paper

APPENDIX 4

Briefing note from Graham Bourton Arrangements for Repairs and Maintenance

The repairs, maintenance and improvement of the HRA stock undertaken by Oxford City Homes falls into the following categories:-

- Responsive Repairs
- Planned Maintenance
- Capital Works
- New Build
- Garage Management
- Estate Property Works

The detailed breakdown of each element with an outline proposal as to how we could continue to improve service and cost cross these and consequently other direct services is as follows:-

Responsive Repairs

The Council has determined the Repairs Policy (i.e. what is tenant responsibility and what is landlord (Council) responsibility) and the workload is obtained by tenants telephoning the Contact Centre directly to request a repair. The repairs are categorised according to priority ranging from emergencies (i.e. work to be completed within 24 hours) to category D work, such as fencing and external works which needs to be completed within 3 months.

Most of the work is raised from information taken from the customer by the Contact Centre staff. There are a number of instances, however where either the tenant's needs cannot be determined or the extent of the work is potentially large / expensive that a pre-inspection of the property is required. This work is undertaken by the Technical Support Team. This team also undertake the outstanding stock condition surveys to determine Decent Homes Standard needs (now virtually complete) and the maintenance of the Stock Condition Database (work undertaken by the Senior Technical Officer).

Proposal

It is proposed that the management of the day to day budget to deal with reactive work created by tenant requests should be the responsibility of the Direct Services Team. This would also require the retention of two surveyors to deal with inspections / clarifications of customer needs. The Direct Services Team would be responsible for the control of the responsive repairs budget and under normal circumstances, the budget will be sufficient to fund the workload received. The only exceptions would be due to severe weather conditions e.g. floods or a long period of snow, or a major infrastructure problem e.g. a burst water main.

The Corporate Assets Team would be responsible, in conjunction with the Head of Housing, for the Repairs Policy and any changes to it, together with the maintenance of the Stock Condition Database and associated survey updates.

Planned Maintenance

Planned Maintenance falls into two categories, namely revenue improvements (work which cannot be capitalised, e.g. decorating, rubbish clearing, garden clearance etc in voids) and servicing / service contracts such as gas servicing, window cleaning, lift maintenance etc.

The improvement works are partly planned, e.g. electrical inspections and gas servicing, but a large proportion of the work is demand led, e.g. voids, disabled adaptations, gas heating system repairs. The service contracts tend to be specialist works undertaken largely by external contractors. Work programmes tend not to vary significantly and member input is usually around common area improvements.

In terms of the management of the works undertaken internally a common standard / lettable standard is understood and the Team Leaders (supervisors of the workforce) undertake both the work specifications and the management / supervision of the works. This has proved to be the most efficient and cost effective way of undertaking the work. In respect of work undertaken by external contractors, the Major Works Team of surveyors specify, tender and manage the contracts.

Proposal

It is proposed that for the work undertaken by the in-house teams, agreement to standard work specifications / lettable standards will be the responsibility of Corporate Assets, with the Direct Services Team applying these standards on a job by job basis, as now. Work programmes will be agreed on a three yearly cycle, updated annually, as proposed jointly by Corporate Assets and Direct Services. The design, tendering and management of specialist service contracts will be undertaken by Corporate Assets. This will mean the transfer of all of the surveying staff to Corporate Assets, with the Team Leaders, Gas and Electrical Teams remaining as part of the Direct Services Team.

It should be noted that the team of surveyors responsible for the External Planned Maintenance Works are also responsible for the design, tendering (as appropriate) and management of specialist work and also the work undertaken by external contractors for part of the Capital Works Programme.

Capital Works

The Capital Works Programme was agreed by Council some 6/7 years ago and that was to undertake whatever work was necessary to achieve the Decent Homes Standard for 100% of the housing stock and maintain it at that level thereafter. The Decent Homes Standard has almost been met for 100% of the stock and will certainly be achieved by the deadline of 31 December 2010. It should be noted that some homes (close to 300) will be classed as decent because the tenant has refused to have any work undertaken. This meets the government criteria, but builds up a need to preserve some budgetary funds to undertake Decent Homes work whenever either the property becomes voids or the tenant has a change of mind. Obviously the job does not stop there because the age of the key components within properties will mean that some of the stock will fall out of decency from January 2011 onwards. A work programme based wholly on the age of key components would have significant peaks and troughs which would not enable effective budgetary or workforce planning. Consequently, a work programme has been designed that the same number of kitchens, bathrooms, central heating systems etc will be replaced annually in order to keep the stock at the Decent Homes Standard.

As with a lot of the Planned Maintenance works undertaken internally, the work standard is established and then the work specifications, tenant liaison and management / supervision of the works is undertaken by the Team Leaders. Again this has proved to be the most cost effective way of undertaking the routine / repetitive works and it is proposed that this should continue.

The design, management and tendering (as appropriate) of non routine / specialist work is the responsibility of the Major Projects Team.

Proposal

It is proposed that for the work undertaken by the in-house teams, agreement to the standard work specifications should be the responsibility of Corporate Assets with the individual work specifications, tenant liaison and supervision of the workforce being undertaken by the Direct Services Team Leaders. The Capital Works Programme should be agreed on a rolling 3 year basis in order to enable effective budgetary and workforce planning. It would be prudent, in principle, to agree to a 20 year work programme in order to maintain homes at the Decent Homes Standard in order to avoid spikes in work programmes / budgetary need. The addresses of the properties requiring capital work improvements will be determined by the Corporate Assets Team. All specialist and works undertaken by external contractors will be specified, tendered (if appropriate) and managed by Corporate Assets.

All of the Major Projects Team will be transferred to Corporate Assets and these staff have been detailed in the Planned Maintenance section of this report.

Asset Development and Regulatory Control

The development aspect of this team's work involves major refurbishment projects of the housing stocks such as sheltered blocks and tower blocks, identifying HRA development opportunities, undertaking feasibility studies, working up to tender stage, including managing consultants and management on site. In terms of regulatory control, the team ensures CDM compliance on major works, undertakes fire risk assessments to comply with the Fire Reform Act and undertaking quantity surveying duties including whole life costing and contract management and advice. This team also works on sustainability issues and commissioning retrofit feasibility studies and projects (currently working on a government exemplar scheme). Asset disposals have always been the responsibility of Corporate Assets and this will remain unchanged.

Proposal

All of these functions will become the responsibility of the Corporate Assets Team.

Garages

In order to maximise efficiency and be cost effective, the garage management function is all within one team. This team undertakes the letting, rent collection and repair and maintenance of garages. Only 2.5 FTE staff are employed in this team and the Team Leader is also responsible for co-ordinating the Council's Community Payback work.

All garage site disposals and redevelopments are the responsibility of Corporate Assets.

Proposal

It is proposed that no change be made to the management responsibility for this service with the 2.5 FTE staff remaining in the Direct Services Team.

Estate Property Works

Currently the Corporate Assets Team undertakes the specification and ordering of estate property works and the Direct Services Team undertakes some of the repair and improvement works.

Proposal

The specification and ordering of works should remain with Corporate Assets and there should be a presumption that subject to delivering good value for money, that the Direct Services Team should undertake all repair and improvement works which are of a non-specialist nature.

Conclusion

It is proposed that the outline principles detailed in this paper will deliver the desired functional split of responsibilities to deliver and will form the basis of a practical means of operating efficiently. It identifies all staff to be transferred from Oxford City Homes to Corporate Assets in order to provide the basis of establishing new organisational structures. To make this successful and ensure that the functional split does not add to cost and hinder efficiency, the input of the Heads of Service responsible for Corporate Assets, Direct Services and Housing is essential to agree the detailed workings on a one Council approach basis.

APPENDIX 5

Report of Graham Stratford, Head of Community Housing & Community Development Proposals for Redesign of Housing Functions

Background

In line with the “One Council” approach being adopted in taking forward the development of more effective customer-facing and back-office services within Oxford City Council, it is appropriate to consider the integration of services for tenants within the wider structure of the council. This approach will deliver real benefits to the council in terms of efficiency and, perhaps more importantly, will safeguard the council’s ability to deliver first class services to our tenants for the foreseeable future. Integration of aspects of the services currently delivered to tenants by specialist HRA teams within teams with broader responsibilities will result in increased capacity and resilience, and will enable closer links to be made between housing staff and officers delivering similar services for other residents.

An example might be the integration of Tenant Participation work with broader community development activities in the city. Whilst it is evident that there are a number of strands of TP work that are concerned with decisions around the management & maintenance of the housing stock, it is equally true that issues concerning the social, economic and environmental regeneration of city neighbourhoods must involve not only our tenants, but also the other residents of those neighbourhoods, working together for the good of their communities, and the development of an integrated team to assist in this work offers the best chance of success..

Tenancy Operations

Tenancy Services sits within Tenancy Operations and is a traditional generic estate management service which no longer meets the demands of modern organisational structures, and is unfitted to delivering the cross-cutting work that is demanded on today’s multi-tenure estates. In particular, the current structure does not allow for the focus on Neighbourhood management and Local Area Cooperation that is enshrined within the Tenancy Services Authority’s Neighbourhood and Community Standard, which states that social landlords:

“Shall co-operate with relevant partners to help promote social, environmental and economic well being in the areas where they own properties” and;

“Shall work in partnership with their tenants and other providers and public bodies where it is effective to do so”, and;

“Shall work in partnership with other public agencies to prevent and tackle antisocial behaviour in the neighbourhoods where they own homes”.

This is a much wider remit than that of the traditional estate management function, and, it should be noted, relates to neighbourhoods rather than simply to council owned stock. This is a sensible approach, as multi-tenure neighbourhoods present problems which cannot be addressed by working only with one element of the resident population, and offers the opportunity to broaden the services we can offer to tenants and other residents of city neighbourhoods.

Proposal

The proposal for consideration is the redistribution of staff into functional specialisms which will better reflect the need for a move towards a neighbourhood management approach. Currently, the Tenancy Services team consists of 1x fte Tenancy Operations Manager (Vacant), 2x fte Tenancy Services Team Leaders, 13x fte Estate Managers and 1x fte Housing Officer and 1x fte Tenancy Services Facilitator, currently seconded to the CRM project

The Tenancy Operations Manager to be used as source post for a Landlord Services Manager who would have responsibility for ensuring performance of Corporate Assets and Direct Services Unit in relation to HRA work (inc all aspects of repairs, voids, planned maintenance, etc.), Customer Services in relation to Contact Centre function, HRA Income collection, face to face services for HRA tenants and leaseholders etc., and linkages between teams within and outside CH&CD that deal with HRA stock or customers etc. This will be a key post, reporting directly to the Head of Service, and working closely with the CH&CD Senior Management Team.

Tenancy Management

In terms of direct reports, the Landlord Services Manager would have only one – the Tenancy Services Team Leader, who would be responsible for a team of not less than 5 Tenants' Advisory Officers, responsible for the technical issues around change of tenancy, but with a wider remit to be a point of contact for tenants who have difficulty in using other contact methods, have problems that fall outside the remit of specialist teams, or have concerns or complaints about any aspect of the services they receive, or about their neighbourhood more generally. These officers will be equipped to provide services to tenants in whichever way is most convenient to the tenant, including in the tenant's own home. The exact number of Tenant Advisory Officers to be worked out from a more detailed assessment of current workload and an assessment of how quickly we could transfer to different means of working.

Tenancy Sustainment

Tenancy Operations currently employs 1x fte Tenancy Sustainment Officer, although it is apparent that Estate managers also fulfil this role to a greater or lesser extent, dependent on need. Work recently undertaken by the Scrutiny review panel into de-designation of council owned accommodation that is currently only available to the over 40s age group has generated cross party support for a programme of de-designation of large numbers of such properties in order to match the stock profile to the profile of the waiting list. This will mean a further increase in the proportion of new tenants with vulnerabilities which are detrimental to their ability to maintain a tenancy.

I therefore propose to increase the number of Tenancy Sustainment officers to 3.5 x fte – three for general needs stock, and 0.5 of a post to provide support for the residents of Riverside Court (which is our only supported housing block for non-elderly people, and previously had a full time support worker). This small team could be sited with the Tenancy management team, but my preference would be to place them in the Accommodation & Support team in Housing needs.

There is a close match between the work of the current Temporary Accommodation Managers in terms of support for residents of temporary accommodation and the work that will be done by Tenancy Sustainment Officers, and many of the TAMS clients will be council tenants when allocated settled housing – co location will enable better cross over working between GF and HRA officers in this respect. Locating this function here will also facilitate full involvement in the Tenants at Risk Group, Families at Risk of Homelessness Group, and the Accommodation Panel which deals with young people at risk of homelessness.

Anti-Social Behaviour

I believe that anti social behaviour issues are best dealt with by a well trained and managed specialist team, and to this end I propose to create 3 HRA funded ASB Officer posts within CANAcT. This will enable the Team to respond fully to all but the most low level ASB issues in a consistent manner, regardless of tenure of the residents involved, avoiding the petty squabbles over jurisdiction that have marked relations in the past, and thereby providing an enhanced service to all residents of our estates and neighbourhoods.

Neighbourhood Management, Community Development, and Tenant Participation.

It is my intention to combine the resources of the Communities & Neighbourhoods team, with those of the Tenant Participation team, and to further add to the resource available by sourcing two posts from the Estate Manager compliment to function as Locality Officers. The latter move will give a 5 strong team of locality officers, whose functions will be to deliver on the community development and partnership agendas that are essential to the regeneration of the areas of deprivation within the city. I feel that it is no longer possible in this area of work to have rigid demarcation lines between work done for the benefit of tenants and that done for the community in general - if we are serious in our intention to deliver social and economic regeneration to areas of deprivation in the city, then it is necessary to pool resources to enable programmes to be developed which benefit all members of those communities.

The current structure of the main Communities & Neighbourhoods Team, to which recruitment is currently underway, calls for three teams, each with one Team Leader, one Locality Officer, and a Community Development Officer (either full or part time). Some short term additional resource is intended to be added from the Breaking the Cycle of Deprivation funding later this year. The addition of a minimum of two posts from Tenant Participation to the remit of one of the Team Leaders would enable that function to continue the good work currently underway, whilst linking it much more closely with general community development programmes, Breaking the Cycle work and other initiatives.

The Locality Officer roles are intended to provide a local focus for work with community associations, residents groups and other agencies such as the police, parish councils, voluntary and third sector organisations. The addition of two posts from HRA funding, based in the areas with the greatest numbers of council stock will supplement the work of the Tenant Participation Officers, and will allow us to have at least one officer concentrating their efforts in each of the main estates.

Furnished Tenancies

The Furnished Tenancies team were originally a part of the Allocations team in Housing Needs. This is a natural place for this team to sit in the new structure, given the links that already exist (furnished tenancies are offered in the initial allocations offer letter) and also given that the Manager of the team is also responsible for the Removal Expenses Scheme (the incentive scheme for tenants to move to smaller properties) which is closely linked in to the work Housing Needs does in managing the waiting list.

Other Staff

There are a number of other staff currently employed within Tenancy Operations and other areas of OCH, providing various kinds of support activity that may also transfer to CH & CD, although there are discussions to be had about the role of corporate services in providing robust support for such functions.

Indicative Savings

I would anticipate that these proposals would generate savings in the region of £150K to £200, and would involve the saving of no less than five and no more than eight posts.

Conclusion

Whilst both tenants and elected members will have concerns over such a major change programme I believe that we can reassure all stakeholders that these changes will enable the Housing Service to retain the best features of the current service, whilst benefiting from the additional skills and resources which integration into the wider council functions will bring. The majority of our tenants live independent lives, and need little from the council in the way of support, and the improvement in services will be a boon to this section of the tenant base. Those with more pressing needs will be able to quickly and easily access the appropriate specialist service, and the Tenants' Advisory Officers will provide both a technical resource for tenancy related work, and a safety net for those who have difficulty negotiating the system.

I am particularly concerned to ensure that our older residents, particularly those in Sheltered accommodation, have the opportunity for regular contact with officers who are known to them, and would look to build this interaction into the work-plans of relevant teams, as well as working closely with the new Supporting People provider of day-to-day support.

Tenants are also concerned about the status of the Tenants Resource Centre, currently located at Horspath Road, given the intention to move to a one-depot solution. Whilst it is too early in the process to make any firm plans (and the resource Centre will remain as is for the interim period), it is possible that we would move towards delivering participation in a more localised way, for example by utilising spaces and ITC resources within Community Centres, for holding meetings, delivering training, etc, thereby further integrating our work with tenants into the fabric of local communities, but it is possible that the establishment of a dedicated Tenants' Resource Centre could form part of future plans for regeneration of, for example, central Blackbird leys.