

Report

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| Report to: | Housing and Technical Resources Committee |
| Date of Meeting: | 29 September 2010 |
| Report by: | Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources) Executive Director (Social Work Resources) Executive Director (Corporate Resources) |

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| Subject: | Proposal to transfer the management of the Money Matters Advice Service (MMAS) from Housing and Technical Resources to Social Work Resources |
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ◆ outline proposals to transfer the management of the Money Matters Advice Service (MMAS) from Housing and Technical Resources to Social Work Resources

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Committee is asked to approve the following recommendation(s):-

- (1) that the proposals to transfer the management of the MMAS from Housing and Technical Resources to Social Work Resources with effect from 1 January 2011 be endorsed
- (2) that the proposals to transfer the management of the MMAS be referred to the Executive Committee for formal approval

3. Background

3.1. The management of the MMAS in its current form has been the responsibility of Housing and Technical Resources for approximately 13 years. Prior to this, the service was managed between a combination of Social Work, Community and Housing and Technical Resources.

3.2. Following recent discussions with Social Work Resources in relation to both the ever increasing links with them and MMAS and the areas of future priorities, it was agreed to look at the benefits of transferring the service to Social Work Resources.

4. Current Service Provision

4.1. At present the service covers three areas of activity, Money Advice, Benefits Advice and Welfare Rights Advice.

4.2. Whilst Money Advice is a valued service, the provision of 'independent' Money Advice frequently clashes within Housing and Technical Resources as the Resource is also responsible for collecting Rents and Council Tax. This has always been held as a serious failing in the service and has restricted our efforts to have the service externally accredited and achieve National Standards. Notwithstanding these concerns, money advisors have dealt with over £19 million worth of client debt.

- 4.3. The services provided in relation to Benefits and Welfare Rights Advice results in many cases of clients receiving large benefits entitlements and is an area where the Council can demonstrate direct assistance to many residents over the years (over £14 million in additional benefits in the last financial year).
- 4.4. In recent years we have been working more closely with Social Work and targeting cases of Home Care recipients. These actions have resulted in many residents receiving additional benefits which have assisted with maximising income for financial assessment and charging purposes and is the opinion of both Resources to represent a far more effective use of our resources.
- 4.5. Such exercises have been supported by the use of information made available from the department for Work and Pensions (DWP) with whom the Council has a Service Level Agreement in place. In addition, two DWP employees are seconded to MMAS, based in Brandon Gate where they provide the Council with a wide range of information including access to relevant DWP systems which help target benefit take up campaigns more effectively.
- 4.6. On an increasing basis, it is clear that many of the clients being dealt with by MMAS are also or should be Social Work clients and that the involvement of two different Resources is not the most effective way of dealing with them.
- 4.7. Housing and Technical Resources also work closely with Social Work Resources staff in providing training in relation to Benefits and Welfare Rights.
- 4.8. Many referrals to Housing and Technical Resources currently come from Social Work Resources as they are in the best position to identify people in need of the service.

5. Benefits of Transfer

- 5.1. The transfer would result in one Resource, Social Work, having full responsibility for the work priorities and allow greater focus to be placed on cases of most need, in particular Home Care Clients and other vulnerable residents that Social Work Resources deal with on a day to day basis.
- 5.2. The transfer would also allow Social Work Resources to direct training of their staff to assist in identifying these cases of greatest need without having, as at present, to rely on Housing and Technical Resources.
- 5.3. The transfer would also allow the service to demonstrate independence from the Council's Rent and Council Tax collection functions and achieve National Standards and seek external accreditation.

6. Detailed Proposals

- 6.1. Following discussions with Social Work Resources, it was agreed that the service would be best served in the future if it was under the management of Social Work Resources.
- 6.2. If accepted as a way forward, it is proposed that this report would be referred to the Executive Committee on November 2010 recommending the transfer, including full budget, to take place on 1 January 2011.

7. Employee Implications

- 7.1. Employees will transfer to Social Work Resources and a new management structure.

8. Financial Implications

A budget of **£1,347,540** will be transferred from Housing and Technical Resources, and **£43,753** will be funded by Fairer Scotland Funding until December 2010 totalling **£1,391,293**. The Fairer Scotland Funding is for the 2 Benefits Advisors, is temporary and ends on 31 March 2011. All posts transferring are detailed below:-

Support Services

Posts transfer from Housing and Technical Resources to Social Work Resources

| Post Title | Grade | No of Posts (FTE) |
|-------------------------------|---------|-------------------|
| MMAS Co-ordinator | Grade 3 | 1.00 |
| Team Leader | Grade 3 | 4.00 |
| Support & Development Officer | Grade 3 | 0.60 |
| Benefits Advice Assistant | Grade 2 | 14.75 |
| Money Advisor | Grade 2 | 13.50 |
| Welfare Rights Officer | Grade 2 | 6.00 |
| Administrative Assistant | Grade 2 | 0.86 |
| Benefits Advisors (FSF) | Grade 2 | 2.00 |
| Clerical Assistant | Grade 1 | 9.00 |
| TOTAL | | 51.71 |

8. Other Implications

8.1. There are no implications for sustainability or risk in terms of the information contained in this report.

9. Equalities Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

9.1. This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a change to an existing policy, function or strategy and therefore, no impact assessment is required.

9.2 Regular consultation with Trades Unions regarding employee related issues continues to take place through established forums.

Lindsay Freeland

Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources)

Harry Stevenson

Executive Director (Social Work Resources)

Robert McIlwain

Executive Director (Corporate Resources)

5 August 2010

Link(s) to Council Objectives and Values

- ◆ Excellent employer
- ◆ Accountable, effective and efficient

Previous References

- ◆ None

List of Background Papers

- ◆ None

Contact for Further Information

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:-

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