

## **REVIEW OF HOUSING HAC'S**

- Staff/members believe that having one HAC is likely to increase the footfall/demand and staff will have less time to carry out their homeless assessments, instead will be utilising most of their time on reception and interviewing homeless.

We currently take on average about 130 homeless applications a week and therefore are using the figure of up to a maximum of 140 homeless applications per week when preparing for the worst case scenario. We believe that this number will not increase through one HAC but if anything due to increased prevention work would decrease. There will only be the equivalent of one GR4 on reception at any one time. Additionally there will be in excess of 25 GR3s in the one HAC and therefore a number of homeless interviews will be conducted by them.

- Don't believe that the drivers for change within the Business Case can be achieved by introducing one HAC.

We disagree. Please set out which drivers for change you believe can't be achieved by having one HAC.

- Will present staff with more problems culminating from an increase in waiting time and customers becoming more agitated, putting staff at potential risk of violence. Also consistency of advice and assistance to customers is mainly achieved through proper training and effective management.

I disagree. Currently some customers can wait in the offices for a significant period before they are seen. In fact I received an e-mail from a member of staff at Sparkbrook this week that highlights that somebody waited over 2 hours to see a triage officer and as you know this is before we would see them. In regards to consistency it is more difficult, for whatever the reason, to have consistency for any service if staff are spread across more than one location. We know there are inconsistencies and staff have also raised this as an issue. Having one office will ensure consistency for staff and for customers and we will also provide a management presence within the Centre.

- Car parking is an issue at Newtown. Having to park on the main road can present potential safety risks. 72% of affected staff are female.

We will be ensuring that we secure as many parking spaces for our staff as possible if the proposal is accepted. We will work with staff to ensure this is distributed fairly and in particular for any staff who are working late but of course we will also need to consider disabilities and where people have a parking space as a reasonable adjustment. Although I accept this is a concern for staff and we will ensure safety wherever possible staff across locations park in the street and walk to their office location. Additionally there are direct bus routes that stop outside of the building. Currently the make-up of Homeless & Pre-Tenancy staff who work in the Newtown office is 77% female.

- Staff/members are requesting two HAC's in order to reduce the footfall, ensure safety and provide adequate parking space.

Having 2 HACs is, we believe, not possible with current staffing levels and would require more staff to ensure officers have time to make decisions etc. As you are aware the council is under no obligation to provide parking spaces for the majority of staff working for the organisation. In regards to the footfall the evidence we have provided regarding the building demonstrates its suitability.

- Why can't we have a slight increase in NAIS officers to cover over two HAC's.

The NAIS service is already reducing to an anticipated number of 38 advisors. This includes the 6 who will be working with us. In order to provide a welfare advice service across the city they require these staff to provide their service. There is no more capacity to give us any additional staff.

- 3 full time GR5 Officers will be sufficient to cover over 3 HAC's taking into account sickness absence. Currently GR5 Officers are barely visible at the HAC's.

There is no opportunity for us to have 3 HACs in the future model and all of the feedback from staff who are concerned about 1 HAC is that we should have 2 HACs. In the one HAC there will be a GR5 on duty every working day so obviously their visibility will increase significantly. If we had 2 HACs we would not be able to have 2 out of 3 GR5s on duty every day as between them they also have 28 GR4s to manage and attend other meetings etc. If we had more than one HAC we would need 4 X GR5 managers.

- Would like management to reconsider Sparkbrook HAC or adjoining building. We understand that BCC has 100 year lease on Sparkbrook building which has to be paid for regardless of whether it is occupied or not. As an alternative we already have existing Council buildings where there are no cost implications.

Sparkbrook is an expensive building and currently it is planned to be a lettings suite. The council is also considering the leasehold agreement. As it is not a CAB building the cost of the lease will fall on the service using the building and is a cost that we cannot meet. Additionally what is clear from the consultation is that the major concerns, apart from our own staff, is regarding customers living in the south of the city.

- No evidence to suggest that all options have been adequately explored.

Please be re-assured they have. We explored the option of 4 HACs, 2 HACs, a city centre HAC and then the proposal for one HAC in Newtown.

- Need to fully understand the rationale of having floor walkers at Newtown.

In order to ensure that customers are only in the queue to see reception when they need to be. It is envisaged that they will be pulling people out of the queue if they have an appointment, taking housing application forms and give receipts and direct people who want other council services to these etc. They will ensure that people in the queue genuinely need to see someone on reception and therefore decreasing the times people need to wait to be seen.

- **Legal Services are there to provide advice and support over legal matters, however they have no experience over how we conduct our day to day business.**

I am unsure whether this question is in relation to the barrister opinion we received to move to one HAC or having legal advice in the One HAC, so I have answered both!

With regards to the legal advice regarding moving to one HAC this advice has come from a nationally renowned barrister, Andrew Arden QC, who has over 40 years' experience in the field of homelessness and represented us on the judicial review regarding gatekeeping. With respect his opinion is valued by us, including our own legal services and although he may never have worked on the front line his experience of defending and challenging Local Authorities is vast.

In regards to having a solicitor in the HAC this is specifically to provide legal advice and support to staff. As you know homelessness is a complex area of law and it is thought that this will support staff to undertake their roles. I am happy to reconsider this decision if Unison/your members don't believe it is appropriate.

- Require costing for Newtown HAC and inhouse Solicitor. Will this impact on saving targets for 2016/17/18.

Will not impact on savings. We already have a legal budget and rather than paying for a solicitor to be based in Woodcock Street the intention is to locate them with our team.

- Require footfall information to establish where the demand is.

Please refer to my e-mail on the 12<sup>th</sup> February that sets out the footfall information.

- Require staffing structure, outcome of customer questionnaire to be formatted into Equality Assessment Analysis.

The staffing structure was shared at the TU meeting regarding budget reductions. The Equality Analysis and the consultation documents will of course be shared once the analysis is completed of the consultation responses.

- **Ensure that we have a written response to UNISON's H&S request.**

Please refer to my e-mail on the 12th February that responds to the questions you submitted regarding H&S.