

**Report to:** **Housing Review Board**

**Date of Meeting:** 17<sup>th</sup> September 2020

**Public Document:** Yes

**Exemption:** None

**Review date for release** None



**Subject:** **Advantage South West- Recruitment and Skills Initiative**

**Purpose of report:** The report sets out the opportunity for us to contribute towards a collaborative project being run by Advantage South West to fund and recruit a Member of staff to co-ordinate and deliver an improvement in the South West housing sector's ability to attract staff.

**Recommendation:** To recommend to Cabinet the participation in the initiative at an indicative cost of £3000 per annum for three years.

**Reason for recommendation:** To work with other Advantage South West Members to pro-actively encourage and retain highly skilled staff within the housing sector through shared initiatives and training and development programmes.  
To encourage engagement with schools and colleges to promote the benefits of a career in housing in order to build our workforce for the future.

**Officer:** Amy Gilbert-Jeans- Housing Service Lead

**Portfolio Holder:** Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Homes and Communities

**Financial implications:** Financial implications are contained within the body of the report. Budget for 20/21 financial year can be found from current underspends within the HRA.

**Legal implications:** There are no legal implications requiring comment.

**Equalities impact:** Low Impact

**Climate change:** Strengthening the housing employment sector ensures we are prepared to take on the challenges of climate change in the future.

**Risk:** Comments  
Low Risk

**Links to background information:** n/a

**Link to [Council Plan](#):** Choose Priorities and delete what not appropriate.  
Outstanding Place and Environment  
Outstanding Homes an Communities  
Outstanding Economic Growth, Productivity, and Prosperity  
Outstanding Council and Council Services

## 1 Background

1.1 The NHF SW HR & L&D Practitioners Group (PATOG) and Advantage South West have been working together to find a solution to the challenges that many housing providers in the South West including East Devon are currently facing in recruitment. We have been invited to participate in the collaborative project to fund and recruit a member of staff to co-ordinate and deliver an improvement in the south west housing sector's ability to attract staff.

1.2 Key responsibilities would include:

- To increase the visibility of housing as an employment sector
- To improve our engagement with education establishments regarding our sector and requirements
- To improve the sector use of the apprenticeship levy
- To develop joint-working programmes for training and development

**A draft job description and person specification have been included as Appendix 1 and 2 to this report**

1.3 At its meeting of 18<sup>th</sup> September 2019 PATOG confirmed its support for this initiative. At its meeting of 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2019 the Advantage South West Board confirmed its support for this initiative.

The project team is:

- Nikki Forward, Chair of PATOG and Head of Human Resources - Ocean Housing
- Michelle Thake, Head of Human Resources – North Devon Homes
- Neil Biddiscombe, Procurement Manager – Advantage South West

## 2 The Challenge

2.1 Social housing landlords are experiencing a challenge in getting suitably skilled people to apply for jobs. The nature of the sector in the south west can mean that individuals move from one Housing Organisation to another, thus a single job recruitment can have the knock-on effect of creating multiple additional recruitments.

2.2 There are particular shortages in the management and delivery of asset management functions and this is predicted to get worse: for example, The Farmer Review of the UK Construction Labour Model suggests that within a decade there will be a 20-25% reduction in the available labour force nationally.

2.3 Though individual organisations are undertaking positive actions in their local areas it is believed that increasing collaborative delivery will see increased synergy and improved outcomes.

## 3 Deliverables

3.1 To employ a member of staff as a "Marketing Recruitment Business Partner" (title tbc) for a 3 year period to undertake targeted actions that will alleviate the challenge. The key activities that this person would undertake, which would be addressed in a phased manner, would include for example:

- Phase 1
  - Increasing our sector visibility
  - Managing the links to target school, college, university and armed forces leavers
  - Promoting the sector as good employers
  - Promoting our social purpose
  - Establishing a single housing recruitment signposting website
  - Co-ordinating and publicising the good practice and collaborative work that is already being undertaken
- Phase 2
  - Improving the input into training provided by colleges
  - Collaboration to maximise return from the apprenticeship levy
  - Co-ordinate collaborative approach to training of existing staff to avoid duplication and integrate best practice
  - Looking at cross-organisation redundancy redeployment
- Phase 3
  - Developing and managing undergraduate/graduate placements, creating a SW Housing Graduate Scheme

3.2 Objective performance targets and measures of success will be put in place in consultation with PATOG.

#### 4 **Costs**

4.1 Participation in this initiative is available to all social housing landlords in the South West. Currently it is predicted that costs for participation would be as follows (p.a.) with a three-year minimum commitment. Once the project team knows how many organisations intend to participate the individual costs can be confirmed.

|               |        |
|---------------|--------|
| 2000 homes    | £1,500 |
| 2,000 – 4,999 | £3,000 |
| 5,000 – 9,999 | £6,000 |
| 10,000 homes  | £9,000 |

#### 5 **Practicalities**

5.1 The person would be employed by Yarlinton Housing Group and based at and managed by the HR team of one of the Advantage South West partners (North Devon Homes, LiveWest, Ocean Housing or YHG). Line management would be to the Head of HR of the hosting partner with reporting lines to Advantage South West's Management Team (made up of directors of the ASW partners).

5.2 Delivery of this project will be dependent on enough social housing providers signing up to the initiative, therefore at this stage it is not confirmed that the project will go ahead.

#### 6 **Conclusion**

6.1 Members are invited to approve the recommendation for the reasons set out in the report. This initiative has not been budgeted for within 2020/2021 but the Board can approve the expenditure as a special item going forward.