

Agenda item:

[No.]

Name of Meeting: Cabinet

On: 18th November 2008

Report Title: **Restructure of Strategic and Community Housing Services**

Report of: Niall Bolger, Director of Urban Environment

Signed:

Contact Officer: Phil Harris, Assistant Director for Strategic and Community Housing,
ext: 4397

Wards(s) affected: **N/A**

Report for: **Non-Key Decision**

1. Purpose (That is, the decision required)

1.1 To give approval to proceed with the proposed restructure and consult formally with all affected staff and the trade unions, delegating to the Director of Urban Environment, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing, authority to amend the staffing structure in response to issues arising during the consultation.

2. Introduction by Cabinet Member (if necessary)

2.1 Members appreciate the impact that housing has on residents' quality of life and health and well being, and they are fully committed to improving the Council's Strategic and Community Housing Services.

2.2 This briefing paper proposes a new staffing structure for Strategic and Community Housing Services that reflects local and national priorities, builds on the improvements made to date, and will make best use of staff resources, partnerships and investment.

2.3 I welcome and support the proposed changes as they will improve joint working, increase productivity, provide better outcomes for service users, assist the achievement of the temporary accommodation target and provide Housing Services with the capacity it needs to play a full and effective strategic housing role.

3. State links with Council Plan Priorities and actions and/or other Strategies:

3.1 The restructure of the service focuses on three of our core values:

1. Improvement – we strive for excellence
2. One Council – we deliver by working together
3. Service – we work for the good of all our diverse communities

3.2 The changes will ensure that Strategic and Community House Services meet one of the Council Plan priorities more effectively: Delivering excellent, customer focused, cost effective services.

3.3 The restructure also links supports the successful and timely implementation of the Homelessness Strategy 2008-11 by aligning teams and amending job descriptions to ensure that the service is well equipped to tackle and prevent homelessness.

4. Recommendations

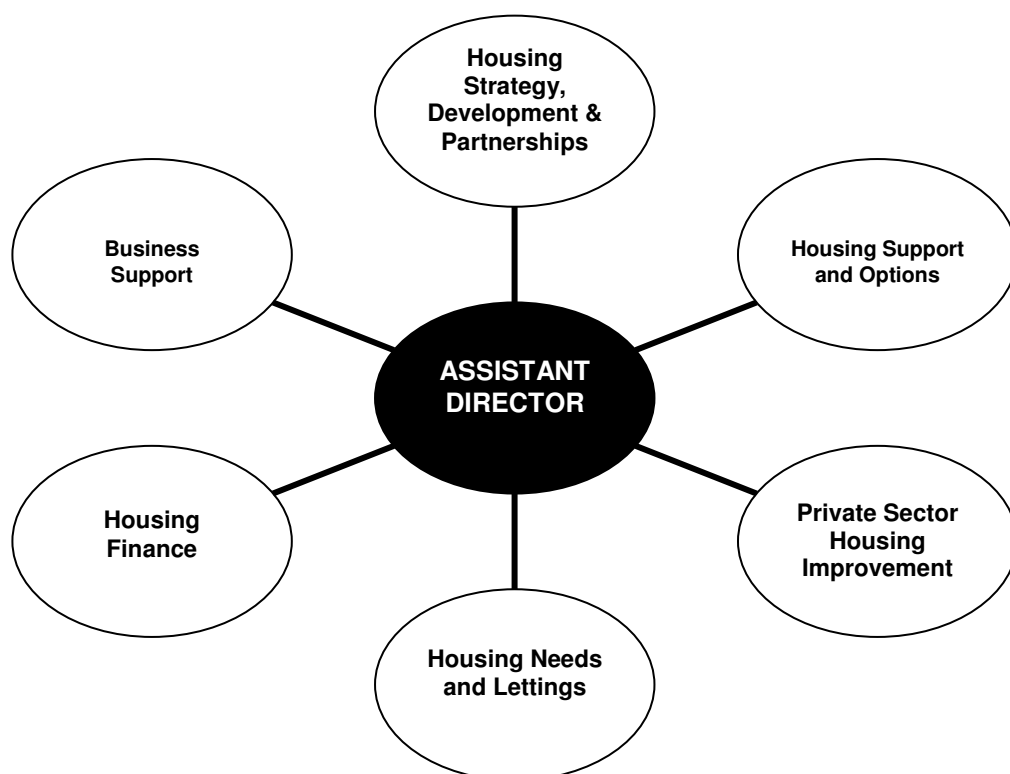
4.1 For Cabinet to give approval to proceed with the proposed restructure and consult formally with all affected staff and the trade unions, delegating to the Director of Urban Environment, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing, authority to amend the staffing structure in response to issues arising during the consultation.

5. Reason for recommendation(s)

5.1 Appendices 1 - 7 of this report provide details of the proposed structure, which affects 197 established Strategic and Community Housing Services staff.

5.2 The primary purpose of the new structure is to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of Strategic and Community Housing Services by defining roles and responsibilities, re-aligning teams and services, improving communication and joint working, holding managers more accountable for the conduct and performance of their teams, encouraging partnership working and actively involving service users in planning, shaping and monitoring services.

5.3 The new group structure re-aligns teams and services into six groups, each managed by a member of the Senior Management Team:



5.4 As well as assisting the integration of the private sector housing functions, the new structure enhances the strategic capacity of the service (especially in relation to the monitoring of the ALMO), draws together the homelessness and lettings functions, and establishes specialist housing advice, housing options and private sector lettings teams to prevent homelessness, provide settled housing and reduce the Council's use of temporary accommodation.

5.5 The new staffing structure creates a Business Support team that will assist and support the Assistant Director and Senior Management Team with the delivery of high quality, well-managed, cost effective services. This will include risk management, health and safety, performance, data integrity, recruitment and induction, training, special projects and the democratic process.

5.6 A new Job Description and Person Specification will be produced for all posts within Strategic and Community Housing Services. This will ensure that everyone has a clear understanding of what is required of them and how they are expected to contribute to the achievement of Haringey's key objectives.

5.7 Housing Strategy, Development and Partnerships Group

This new team brings together the traditional strategic housing functions of ALMO Client, Housing Enabling and Housing Strategy and Partnerships.

Including an enhanced ALMO Client Team and a refreshed Housing Strategy and Partnerships Team, it draws together not just the enabling, strategic and partnership functions, but also the ALMO and the registered social bodies.

The team will have the expertise and capacity to develop and communicate a clear and effective overarching strategic framework for housing, attract and maximise investment in good quality affordable and intermediate housing, provide a robust ALMO client function and ensure that Homes for Haringey manages and maintains the Council's housing stock to the required standards.

5.8 Housing Support and Options Group

Comprising five teams (Housing Advice, Housing Options, Private Sector Lettings, Vulnerable Adults and Hearthstone) this Group will specialise in the prevention of homelessness and the achievement of settled housing solutions that do not normally involve the provision of social rented housing.

Its main purpose is to provide home owners, tenants and people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness with high quality advice and assistance in order to prevent homelessness, tackle domestic violence, improve housing conditions, enable access to affordable home ownership and the private rented sector, and support planned move-on from hospital, residential care and supported housing.

Specialist teams, including a new multi disciplinary Private Sector Lettings Team, will replace the existing Prevention and Options Service. With their emphasis on early intervention, housing options, joint working and homelessness prevention, these services will help people to help themselves.

The **Housing Advice Team** will provide comprehensive advice on all aspects of housing (including landlord and tenant law, harassment and unlawful eviction, disrepair, rent and mortgage arrears, the housing implications of domestic violence and/or relationship breakdown, defending possession proceedings and the assessment of welfare benefits and tax credits) in order to improve housing conditions and prevent homelessness.

The **Housing Options Team** will provide expert advice on the full range of options (including affordable home ownership, private rented accommodation, the sanctuary scheme, mutual exchanges, sheltered housing, moving from under occupied social housing, and moving out of Haringey), together with the eligibility criteria, in order to enable service users to make an informed decision on which options will best meet their housing and support needs.

The **Private Sector Lettings Team** will work proactively with private landlords to make it easier for people who are living in temporary accommodation or about to become homeless to find and keep good quality, affordable, well managed private rented accommodation.

5.9 Private Sector Housing Improvement Team

This team brings together a wide range of activities (including licensing, advice, financial assistance, risk based interventions and enforcement action) designed to improve housing conditions in the private sector.

Its main purpose is to ensure that all private sector housing is safe and habitable, that all vulnerable people living in the private rented sector live in homes that meet the decent homes standard, that there are effective controls in place to license and regulate houses in multiple occupation, and that there is a programme of action to raise standards in the private rented sector.

The new staffing structure addresses the deficiencies in the existing structure, including the absence of team leaders.

The Private Sector Housing Improvement Team will work proactively with the Housing Advice and Options Team to improve housing conditions, encourage the provision of good quality, well managed private rented accommodation, and secure tenancy nomination rights to empty homes brought back into use.

Over the next couple of years, the team will play an increasingly active role in setting, monitoring and maintaining standards in temporary accommodation.

5.10 Housing Needs and Lettings Group

This new team brings together the procurement and management of temporary accommodation, the administration of the housing register, the assessment of housing need, the investigation and determination of homelessness applications, and the letting of social housing.

Its purpose is to procure good quality temporary accommodation, provide tenancy support for the residents of temporary accommodation, and deliver a high quality, customer-centred assessments and lettings service for housing applicants, homeless people and tenants of social housing.

This new configuration of services achieves a clear separation between **Housing Needs and Lettings** (focused on the provision of temporary accommodation and social rented housing) and **Housing Support and Options** which prevents homelessness and achieves settled housing solutions, usually without the need to provide temporary accommodation or social housing.

The new group includes the Homelessness Team (charged with responsibility for authorising all placements in temporary accommodation) and a Home Visiting Team that plays a vital role in verifying applicants' circumstances, investigating and preventing parental exclusions, undertaking occupancy checks in temporary accommodation, and promoting housing options.

By drawing together the procurement and management of temporary accommodation, all housing assessments, and the homelessness and lettings functions, this new configuration of services will improve communication between teams that have not always worked well together in the past.

5.11 Housing Finance Team

The main purpose of this team is to provide the Strategic and Community Housing Service with a high quality financial planning and advice service, together with monthly budget monitoring and reporting, and prepare Housing's Final Accounts for inclusion in the Council's Annual Statement of Accounts.

The Income Recovery Team works proactively with homeless households living in temporary accommodation to maximise the collection of rent and service charges. However, in future, the team will work in partnership with other stakeholders to provide comprehensive advice on in-work benefits, training and employment options and other initiatives designed to tackle worklessness.

In their enhanced advisory role, the Head of Housing Finance will provide the ALMO Client Manager and the Head of Housing Strategy, Development and Partnerships with high quality financial advice, guidance and assistance in monitoring the Housing Revenue Account and decent homes programme.

6. Other options considered

- (a) Proceed with the proposed restructure and consult formally with all affected staff and the trade unions, delegating to the Director of Urban Environment, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing, authority to amend the staffing structure in response to issues arising during the consultation.
- (b) Proceed with the proposed structure, but delay its implementation for one year and appoint interim managers for all essential vacant posts.
- (c) Proceed with the restructure of the Housing Strategy, Development and Partnerships team only, and either delay or abandon the restructure of the other parts of Strategic and Community Housing Services.
- (d) Leave the structure unchanged, and appoint to all essential vacant posts.

7. Summary

- 7.1 There is a need to revise the staffing structure of Strategic and Community Housing Services to ensure that it is fit for purpose and equipped to deliver high quality customer-centred services that tackle and prevent homelessness, meet the borough's current and future housing needs, and contribute fully to the achievement of Haringey's strategic priorities.
- 7.2 The improvement of Strategic and Community Housing Services is a priority for Members and is being overseen by a Housing Improvement Board that meets fortnightly and is chaired by the Council's Chief Executive.
- 7.3 The first phase of the restructure, affecting the Senior Management Team and those fourth tier managers whose posts have been evaluated at grade PO8, has been agreed by the Director of Urban Environment, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing, under delegated authority.
- 7.4 This report sets out the rationale for the restructure, provides details of the improvements expected from the changes, and seeks Members' agreement to proceed with formal consultation with staff and the Trade Unions on the second phase of the restructure affecting all Strategic and Community Housing Services staff whose posts have been evaluated at a grade below PO8.

8. Chief Financial Officer Comments

- 8.1 If the new structure is agreed recruitment can only take place to those posts that are funded within the approved Strategic and Community Housing Non Ring Fenced budget. Funding must be clearly identified and approved before recruiting to any unfunded posts. If the identified funding is for a limited period then recruitment should be on a fixed term basis corresponding to the period funding is approved for. If any redundancy costs arise from the restructure, these will also need to be contained within the service budget.

9. Head of Legal Services Comments

- 9.1 The proposals involving the restructuring of the service should be the subject of consultation with the staff within the service and their Trade Union representatives and the report indicates that this is to occur. The restructuring process should be undertaken in compliance with the Council's policies and procedures concerning organisational change, redundancy and redeployment.
- 9.2 Where the extent and nature of the proposals for any restructuring place at least 20 members of staff at risk of redundancy formal statutory consultation with trade union representatives under the provisions of Section 188 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992. Such provisions include the requirement that the consultation should include consultation about the ways of:
- avoiding the dismissals;
 - reducing the number of employees to be dismissed; and
 - mitigating the consequences of the dismissals

9.3 Any notice of dismissal must not be given until after the completion of statutory consultation. It is not entirely clear from the report as to whether at least 20 members of staff are placed at risk. However, the above statutory duties should be borne in mind.

10. Head of Procurement Comments

N/A

11. Equalities and Community Cohesion Comments

11.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment relating to Organisational Change is currently being completed in consultation with HR.

11.2 The restructure will follow the Haringey's guidelines for equalities set out in the equalities organisational change guidance.

12. Consultation

12.1 Informal consultation with the Trade Unions commenced in September 2008 and regular meetings are scheduled to take place with all affected staff and the Trade Unions to discuss the proposals and address any concerns.

12.2 If Cabinet gives the go-ahead for consultation on the second phase of the restructure, formal consultation with all affected staff and the Trade Unions will commence in November 2008 and last for a minimum of six weeks.

12.3 All members of staff affected by the restructure will have the opportunity to meet with the Assistant Director and Trade Unions to discuss issues that have arisen. They will also be able to attend the scheduled consultation meetings.

13. Service Financial Comments

13.1 The detailed calculations of the cost of the proposed restructure have been made. The total cost of salaries under the new structure will be contained within the Strategic and Community Housing Services Non Ring Fenced Budget for salaries in the sum of £8.8m.

13.2 Posts shown as 'unfunded' on the attached staffing structure (Appendices 1-7) will only be recruited to if additional funding is secured from another source. It is hoped that these might be funded from future salary savings resulting from the Council's reduced use of temporary accommodation and/or vacant posts.

13.3 The proposed new structure will be suitable for the next five years as built into it is the flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances. For example, with the continued reduction in Temporary Accommodation, resources will be able to be redirected to teams such as Enabling who will play the next step in reducing homelessness and providing housing supply in Haringey.

14. Use of appendices/ tables/ photographs

1. S&CHS SMT
2. Strategy, Development and Partnerships
3. Housing Improvement (Private Sector)
4. Housing Finance
- 5a Housing Needs and Lettings (a)
- 5b Housing Needs and Lettings (b)
- 6 Housing Support and Options
- 7 Business Support

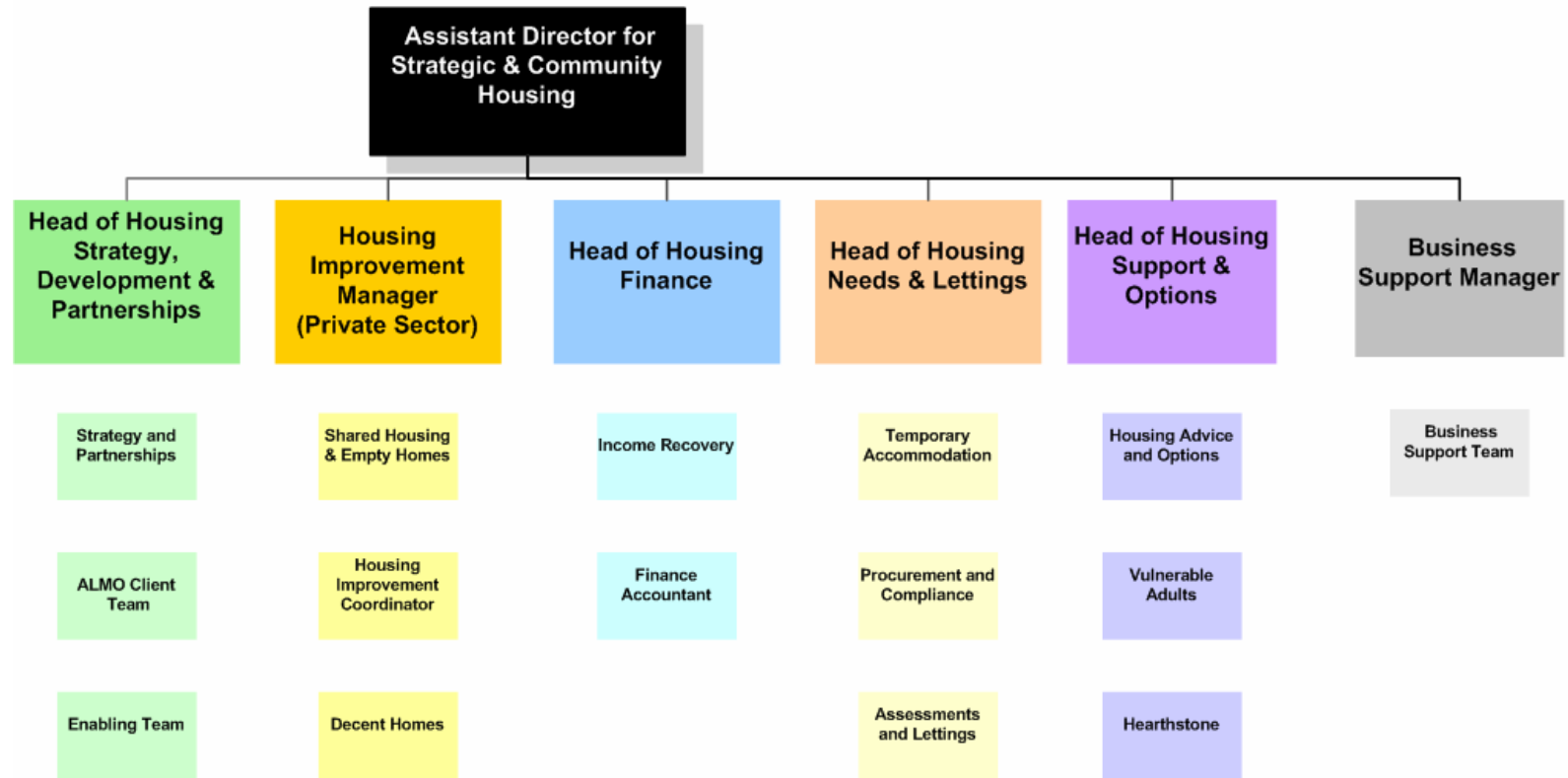
15. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

- Haringey Council's Organisational Change Policy

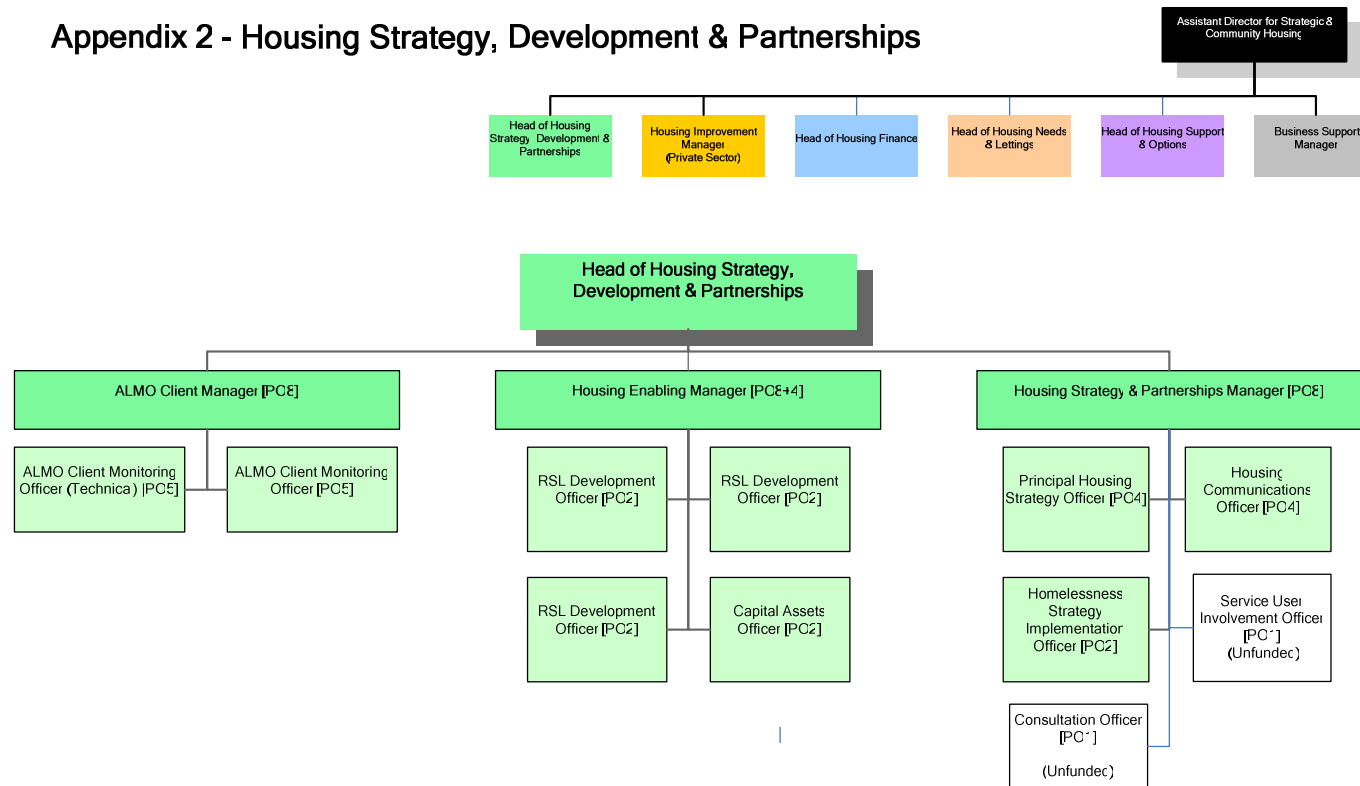
Appendices – Structure Charts

Appendix 1

Strategic & Community Housing Services



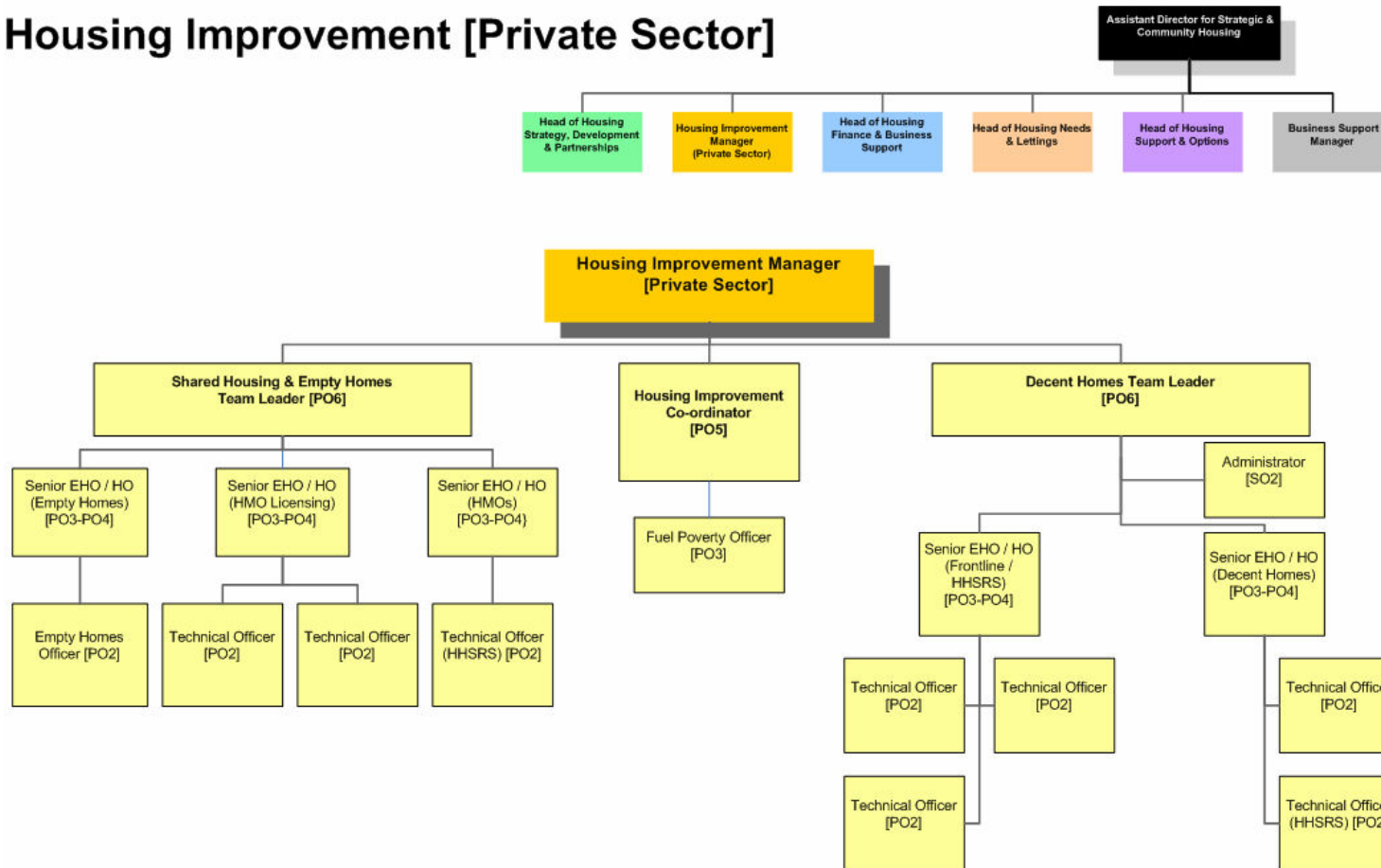
Appendix 2 - Housing Strategy, Development & Partnerships



[Diagram 2 of 7] ² October 2008

Appendix 3

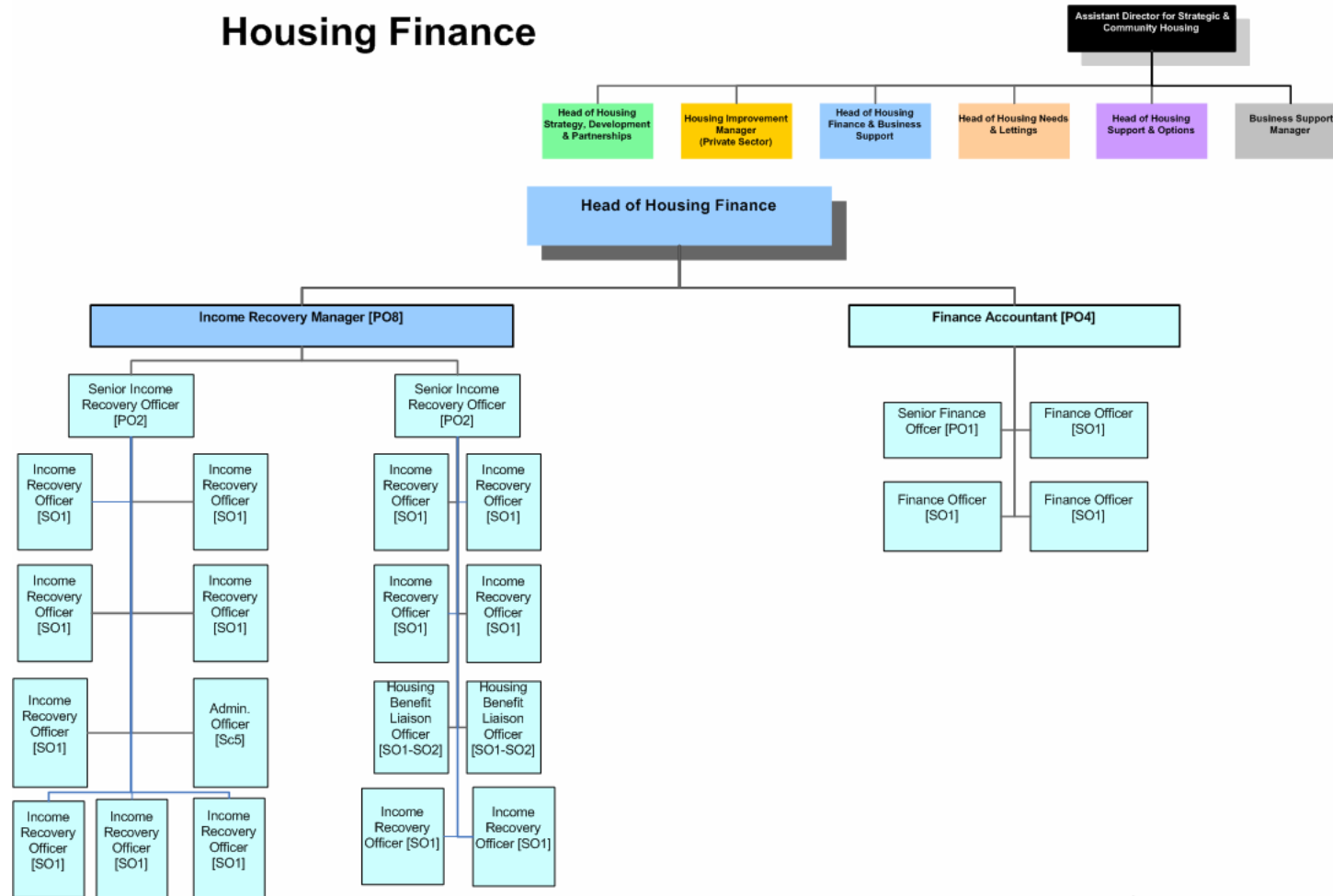
Housing Improvement [Private Sector]



[Diagram 3 of 6] ♦ October 2008

Appendix 4

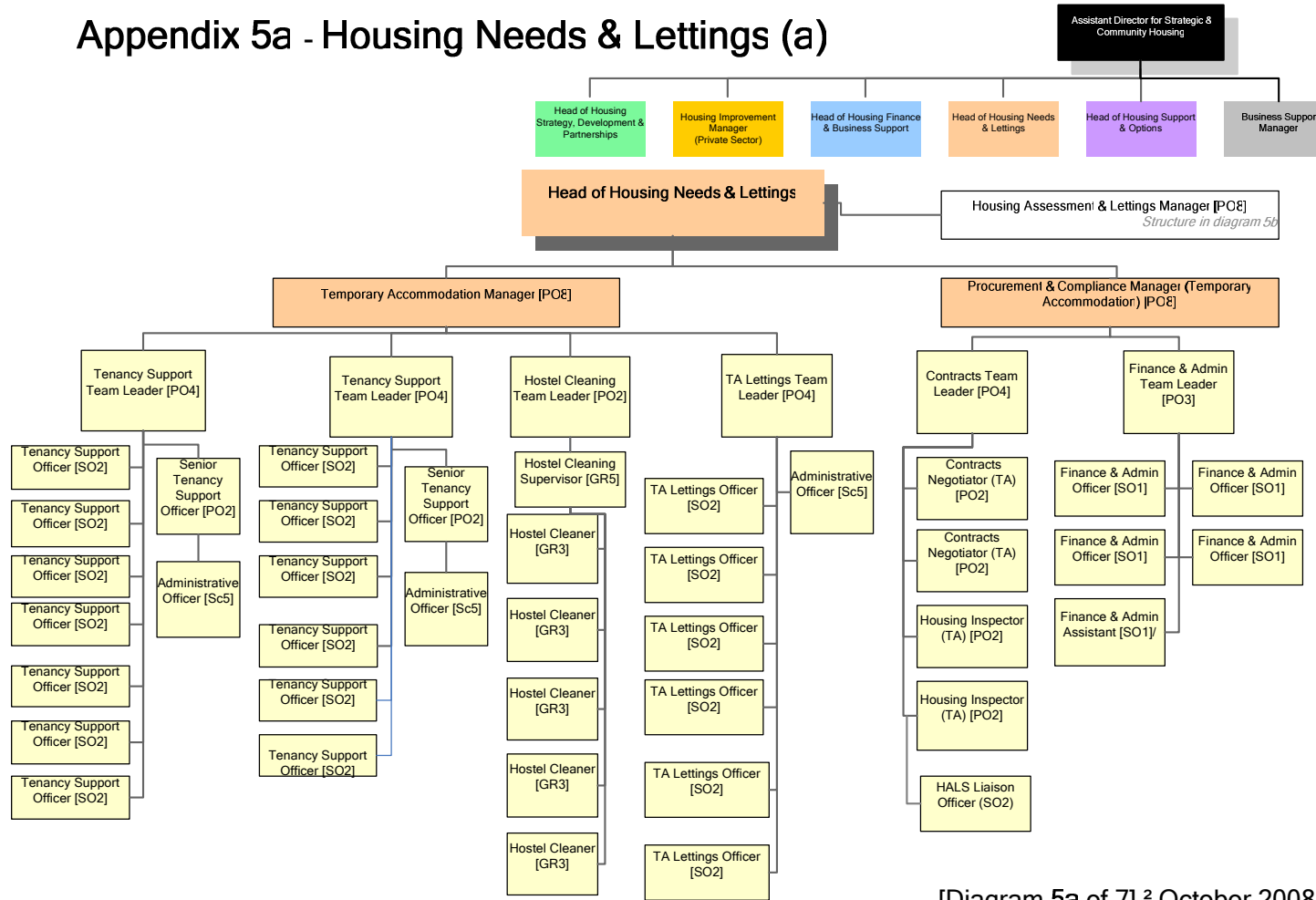
Housing Finance



[Diagram 4 of 7] ♦ October 2008

Appendix 5a

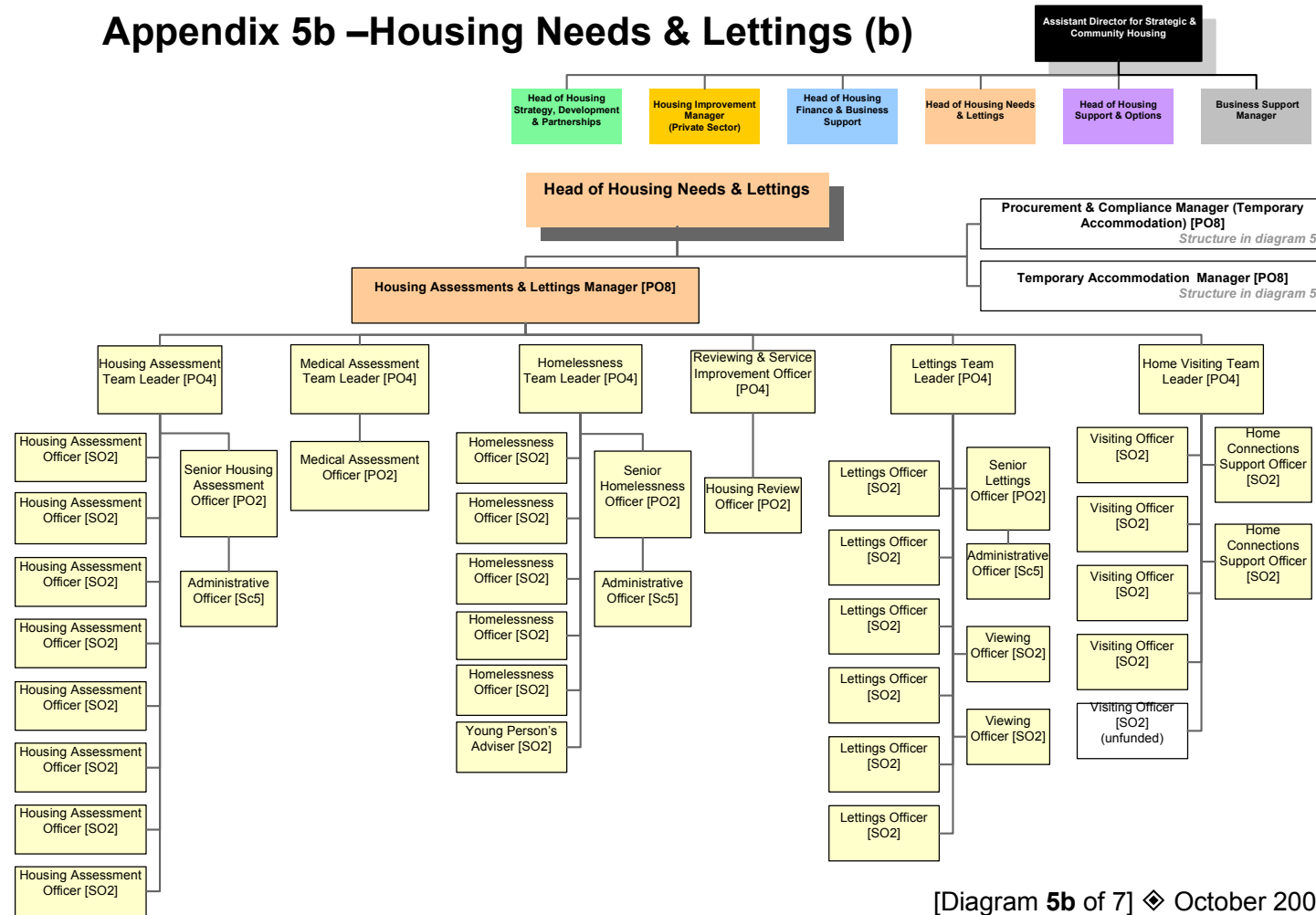
Appendix 5a - Housing Needs & Lettings (a)



[Diagram 5a of 7] 2 October 2008

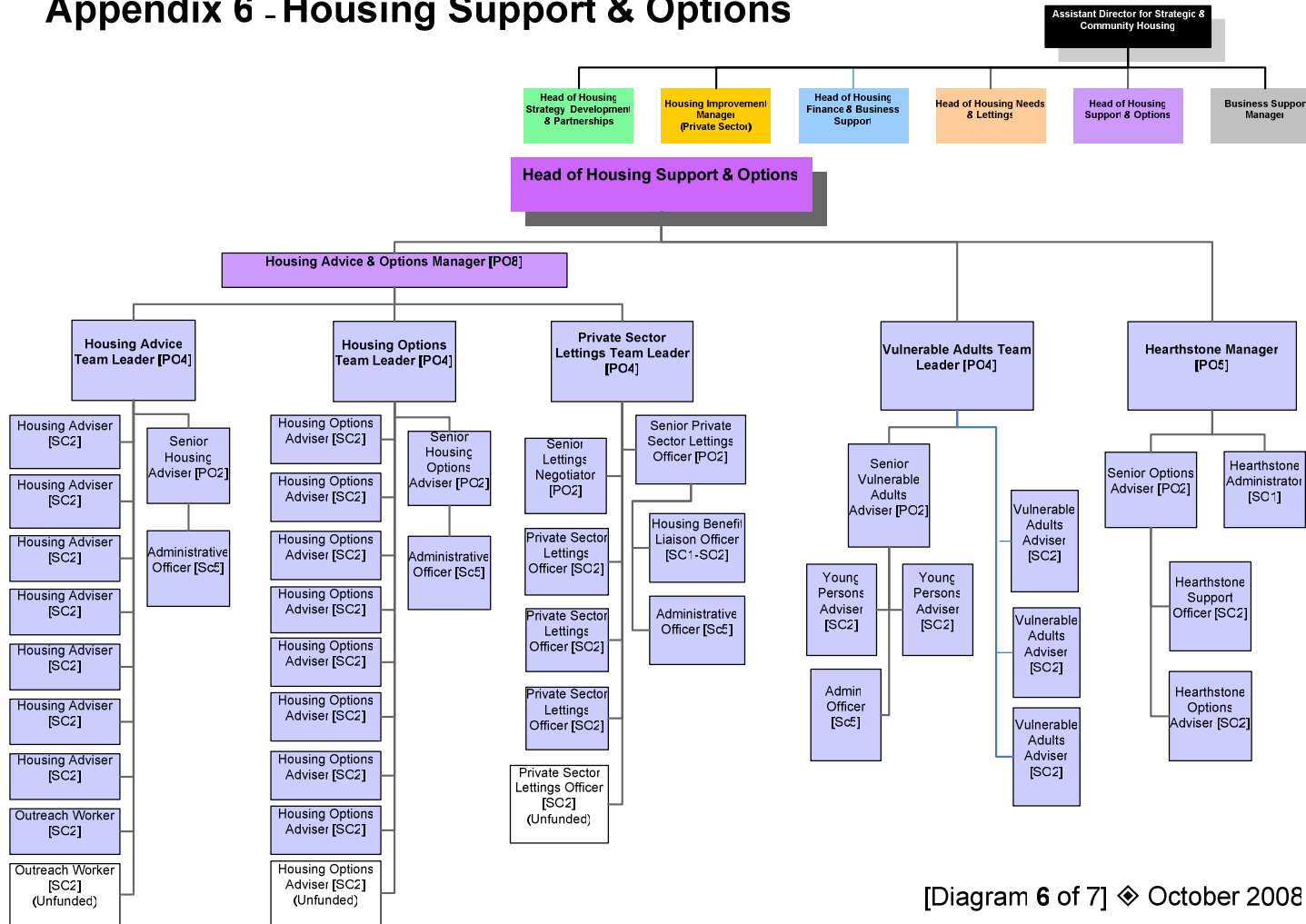
Appendix 5b

Appendix 5b –Housing Needs & Lettings (b)



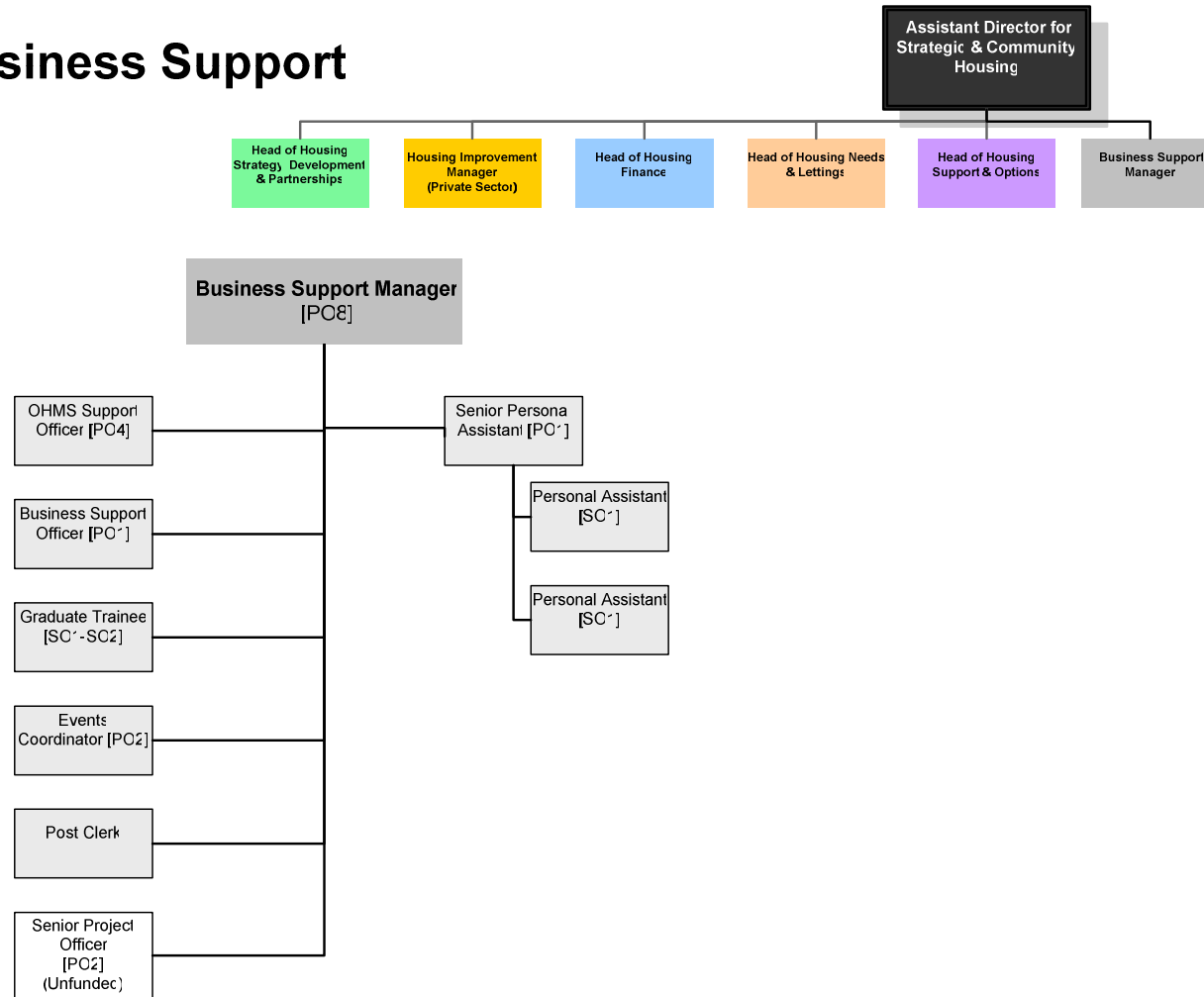
[Diagram 5b of 7] ♦ October 2008

Appendix 6 - Housing Support & Options



[Diagram 6 of 7] ♦ October 2008

Appendix 7 - Business Support



[Diagram 7 of 7] ♦ October 2008