

# Title of report: Reprourement of New IT Software to support Housing Solutions and Choice Based Letting

**Decision maker:** Cabinet member adults, health and wellbeing

**Decision date:**

22/04/2024

## **Classification**

Open

## **Decision type**

Non-key

## **Wards affected**

(All Wards);

## **Purpose**

To seek approval for the procurement of an IT system to support the management of housing solutions, choice based letting arrangements, registrations and homelessness in Herefordshire; aligning with our legal statutory duties.

## **Recommendation(s)**

**That:**

- a) **Total expenditure of up to £285,000.00 from Community Wellbeing revenue budget is approved for the procurement and implementation of a new software system to support housing solutions and choice based letting;**
- b) **All operational decisions required to implement recommendation are delegated to the Corporate Director Community Wellbeing in consultation with the Cabinet Member Adults, Health and Wellbeing.**

## **Alternative options**

1. Continue with current software system: The contract with the current provider has been extended beyond 50% of the original contract value. There is therefore no option to extend the current contract beyond November 2024. With a number of challenges identified with the legacy system, the procurement of a new system also provides an opportunity to implement a system which is fit for purpose, more efficient and would offer best value for money. Not

procuring a new system presents a risk that statutory duties could not be undertaken by Herefordshire Council.

### **Key considerations**

2. A decision was taken in January 2018 to initiate a procurement process of a specialist IT system to support new housing allocations arrangements, procured by way of an open tender process, subject to award of a contract for up to 5 years from April 2018 up to a maximum value of £200k: [Reprocurement of Housing IT services.pdf \(herefordshire.gov.uk\)](#).
3. The Housing Solutions Team, within the Community Wellbeing directorate currently use CIVICA/ABRITAS software, locally known as 'Home Point', which supports our community and partner organisations. This platform performs a case management system for housing solutions, registrations and homelessness; aligning with our legal statutory duties.
4. The current system has been operational since August 2018, with several contract extensions undertaken in that time.
5. The council has not tested the market for a number of years. Procurement of a new software package will allow the council to implement a system with the aims of improving efficiency, improving data accuracy and enabling us to perform our statutory obligations, contributing to a better provision for our end users and community.
6. The council has a range of compliances, regulations and standards we must adhere to, including the statutory duties within Strategic Housing. The new software system will be a primary source to record, store, and report on these duties but also support and capture further information that would assist future housing needs and developments. Failure to meet these Government requirements could result in Herefordshire Council being put into special measures.
7. Data returns on homeless figures must be submitted quarterly to the Department of Levelling Up, Housing Communities. Herefordshire Council is awarded grant funding based on that data; late submissions will result in reduced grant which will have a detrimental effect on the services as homeless numbers are increasing. The current system does not pull together this information into a report format, therefore officer time is required to gather and manipulate this information manually. This is a costly way of gathering information and can result in errors and extra costs.
8. The procurement of a new software solution will be progressed through G-Cloud 13 Crown Commercial Service (CCS) Framework. The procurement process will be undertaken in line with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules (CPR). By following this principle best value is observed throughout and value for money is fundamental to the procurement activity the council carries out. The preferred procurement route has been determined according to the criteria of: cost/value for money, quality/specialisation and capacity to deliver within timescales.

### **Community impact**

9. The current software system is used to process statutory functions of the local authority, which in turn support the community. The existing contract cannot be extended further, and therefore a new system must be procured to support delivery of these statutory functions to our communities, and to enable statutory reporting on those functions.
10. The provision of an IT solution that supports the housing register and new allocation arrangements will enable applicants with a housing need to access the housing register and qualify for social housing properties for which the council has nomination rights. This supports the council's priority 'to enable residents to live safe, healthy and independent lives'.

11. Procurement of a new IT solution will make the register more accessible on devices regularly used by younger people, including looked after children and/or children leaving care and allow significant changes to be made to give Care Leavers a higher banding priority, currently not available unless the system is manually changed.

## **Environmental Impact**

12. Herefordshire Council provides and purchases a wide range of services for the people of Herefordshire. Together with partner organisations in the private, public and voluntary sectors we share a strong commitment to improving our environmental sustainability, achieving carbon neutrality and to protect and enhance Herefordshire's outstanding natural environment.

## **Equality duty**

13. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to –

- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
  - b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
  - c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
14. The procurement process identifies that the IT system procured must support accessibility for all service users in compliance with Public Sector body accessibility regulations WCAG2.1 Level AA and WCAG2.2. In addition, public sector websites and mobile apps must publish an accessibility statement.

## **Resource implications**

15. The implementation of a new system will require;
  - a. committed and dedicated officer resource from the business areas in scope;
  - b. focussed support from Hoople, the requirements of which will be fully understood on contract award;
  - c. Programme Management Office support for project management;
  - d. Commercial Services support for the administration of tender process and contract award.

Revenue cost of project	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	Future Years	Total
Estimated Supplier implementation costs*	100	0	0	0	100
Licenses and hosting**	40	40	40	40	-160
Civica data consultancy	10	0	0	0	10
Estimated Hoople support***	15	0	0	0	15
		0	0	0	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>285</b>

Funding streams – base budget	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	Future Years	Total
Housing Solutions existing base budget	40	20	20	20	100
Estimated RP Recharges**	20	20	20	20	80
Housing Solutions Balance	105	0	0	0	105
<b>TOTAL</b>					<b>285</b>

*\*The above supplier costing is based on a Request for Information exercise completed in February 2024, where nine providers have submitted a return. Having assessed the responses (which included a wide range of potential costs), with support from Hoople, the above system implementation cost is felt to be a realistic budget to inform the specification for tender. This cost is a one off to purchase the system that forms part of a statutory duty, to hold a waiting list and process applicants as part of the Homelessness Reduction Act.*

*\*\*The Registered Providers will be recharged for all adverts advertised through the IT system, it is envisaged that the recharges will cover the costs of the licence.*

*\*\*\*Hoople costs are estimated until supplier contract has been awarded and level of technical support (not provided by the system supplier) is refined.*

## Legal implications

- The legal implications are contained with other parts of this report. This decision enables the Council to procure these services in accordance with the Council's Constitution and the procurement regulations.

## Risk management

- Implementation of a new IT system for Housing Solutions and Choice Based Lettings presents both risks and opportunities:

Risk / opportunity	Mitigation
A modern software platform, which is easy to record, update and maintain, and time savings through improved data reporting; current Home Point is difficult to draw data reporting from. This will encourage better and more efficient ways of working. In addition, a new system will reduce the need for costly 'add-ons' such as data changes, editing and extensions to current contract or legislation.	Reduce single points of failure as not all staff know how to complete or administer performance reports due to complexity of current system;  Statutory reporting requirements being met;  Timely and accurate responses to Freedom of Information requests or complaints.
Time to scope, plan, procure, test and implement a new software system to replace current Home Point database.	Discussions with current provider ABRITAS to extend a final time allowing delivery no later than 19 November 2024. Variation contract as of 27/02/24 completed and awaiting signatories.
Poor quality data on current system.	Cleanse data where possible (not implementing and further cost on current system) prior to new implementation/migration.
Team around project – suitable staff to work along with housing to support facilitation of the new software package. (Legal, IT, Governance, Procurement, Hoople IT, Project Management).	With support of allocated Project Manager – to source and drive forwards with the project there is now a project board in place to support and coordinate activities.
Statutory duties must be adhered to and fulfilled with the new system as current one does not work effectively to support the homeless element.	Market testing will be sourced, and this risk will be a high priority factor as it is a legal requirement.
Hidden Costings – initial development, licence fees, training, updates, maintenance and ongoing technical support.	Tender documents must be written so that clarity on costs, alongside meeting statutory and system requirements, can be achieved before contract award.

18. The identified risks will be managed at a service level

### Consultees

19. The Strategic Housing service and partners have consulted on the requirements needed from the new software solution.

### Appendices

None

**Background papers**

None

**Report Reviewers Used for appraising this report:**

Governance	John Coleman	Date 12/04/2024
Finance	Wendy Pickering	Date 09/04/2024
Legal	Sean O'Connor	Date 03/04/2024
Communications	Luenne Featherstone	Date 02/04/2024
Equality Duty	Harriet Yellin	Date 02/04/2024
Procurement	Carrie Christopher	Date 15/04/2024
Risk	Jo Needs	Date 02/04/2024

Approved by	Hilary Hall	Date 15/04/2024
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**Please include a glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report.**