

Subject:	Housing ICT Business Plan		
Date of Meeting:	10 September 2014		
Report of:	Executive Director – Environment, Development & Housing		
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Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT**

- 1.1 This report introduces the Housing ICT business plan which sets out the individual ICT projects that have been identified as necessary in the short, medium and long term, following the recent Tenant and Resident Scrutiny Panel report on the Housing Customer Service Team.
- 1.2 The plan reflects the importance of ICT in providing quality services to residents and in giving the right tools to staff to carry out their work.
- 1.3 This report also updates Housing Committee on the actions taken in response to recommendations about ICT made by the Tenant and Resident Scrutiny Panel in their report.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the committee notes the attached Housing ICT business plan and the individual projects set out within it.

3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 A key finding of the Tenant and Resident Scrutiny Panel report on the Housing Customer Service Team was that *'investment in ICT is vital to support the (team), as well as other housing services'* and three of the four recommendations the Panel made were about ICT.
- 3.2 Housing's response to the Panel's report was presented at the April meeting of this committee. This report provides an update on the work that has taken place since then to implement these three recommendations.

4. UPDATE ON THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 **Recommendation 1** – *‘That the Head of Housing commits to exploring the corporate Customer Experience Management (CEM) platform, being rolled out in other services, to see if there is a business case to be presented to the Customer Access Programme Board for it being introduced as a priority for the Housing Service’.*
- 4.2 Housing officers have met with colleagues from the corporate team that has supported other service areas to introduce Firmstep, the council’s chosen CEM system, to develop an action plan to put a business case to the Customer Access Programme Board and the ICT Change Advisory Board for Housing to invest in the purchase and development of Firmstep.
- 4.3 Officers are currently working through the following actions:
- 4.4 Analysing resident demands on the Housing service – identifying the number and type of resident queries to help understand the range of processes in the service.
- 4.5 Mapping these processes to show waste/opportunities to automate work or link teams through the CEM.
- 4.6 Speaking to Firmstep so they have an understanding of Housing’s needs and the service can get information on costs.
- 4.7 Redesigning processes (possibly with Firmstep) to provide a specification for the CEM.
- 4.8 Developing a project proposal/business case for the ICT Change Advisory Board and Customer Access Programme Board.
- 4.9 Providing the boards support the business case, planning the time, resources and costs needed to implement CEM within Housing.
- 4.10 **Recommendation 2** – *‘The Head of Housing produces a business plan for ICT in the Housing Service, including the Housing Customer Service Team. This would include short, medium and long term objectives, to be provided within four months of this Panel report going to committee (August 2014)’.*
- 4.11 The business plan is attached as Appendix 1.
- 4.12 A Housing ICT Programme Board will be set up this month to co-ordinate and manage the various projects in the business plan. The board will be accountable for the delivery of the different work streams within the programme.
- 4.13 The business plan will be expanded and updated as the Programme Board meets and the projects are developed.
- 4.14 **Recommendation 3** - *‘While the OHMS (Open Housing Management System) computer system continues to be used, the panel feels it is beneficial to recommend that its service and cost effectiveness is evaluated to determine whether future investment is needed for upgrades to the system to meet service*

needs. The evaluation could also assess whether consideration needs to be given to the replacement of the housing management ICT system in the longer term'.

- 4.15 The ICT business plan includes a project to review OHMS to determine whether it continues to be fit for purpose or whether there is a system on the market that would better meet Housing's needs.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

- 5.1 The Tenant and Resident Scrutiny Panel considered the results of resident surveys and feedback in their review of the Housing Customer Services Team and when making their recommendations on changes to the ICT the team use.
- 5.2 A staff workshop was held on 4 June 2014 where colleagues from across the service came together to reflect and debate the use of ICT within housing. Staff demonstrated at this workshop that they have high levels of customer focus and a desire to work collaboratively to improve ICT systems.
- 5.3 The workshop also revealed the wide range of systems and databases (both internal and web based) that are used in the service. There are also a number of local spreadsheets and a variety of shared drives used by teams to store and retrieve information. Our aim is to reduce use of these to ensure information is easily accessible and shared between teams.
- 5.4 Officers at the workshop came up with a variety of ideas that are included in the Housing ICT business plan and some ideas that were several years in the future, for example, using technology within tenants' homes to easily track or identify repairs and improvements.
- 5.5 As the projects in the business plan are developed there will be actions in the plan to review services and processes in conjunction with residents to ensure ICT underpins and supports business improvement.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 This report provides information about work that will be undertaken in the short, medium and long term within Housing to improve ICT.
- 6.2 If supported, the projects in this plan will lead to the introduction of modern and 'fit for purpose' ICT within Housing which in turn will improve the customer experience for residents who make use of the council's ICT systems on a daily basis to access services, advice and information.

7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Financial Implications

The HRA capital programme 2014-17 has £0.080 million for spend on ICT during 2104/15 and indicative funding of £0.100 million for both 2015/16 and 2016/17. There will be financial implications to implementing the business plan but these will not be known until further assessments of the changes required have been

established. As and when the costs for delivery of the various projects become known, if these cannot be met from current budget provisions, further reports will be submitted to this committee to enable decisions to be made on whether or not to go ahead with the project(s) and agree resources required.

Finance Officer Consulted: Monica Brooks

Date: 20/08/14

7.2 Legal Implications

There are no significant legal implications arising from the report's recommendation.

Lawyer Consulted: Liz Woodley

Date: 26/08/14

7.3 Equalities Implications

A CEM system will provide much better equalities monitoring within Housing by being able to provide comprehensive reports on who is accessing services and why. This data will be used in Equalities Impact Assessments and to tailor services for particular groups of residents and individuals.

Equalities Impact Assessments will be carried out for each of the projects in the business plan as they are developed.

7.4 Sustainability Implications

Improved ICT and work processes will eliminate waste within Housing and lead to cheaper and more efficient services. A wider self serve offer and more mobile workforce will make it easier for residents to contact Housing without making a journey to a Housing Office.

7.5 Risk and Opportunity Management Implications

A risk register has been started as part of the Housing ICT business plan and this will be maintained throughout the life of the plan. Introducing new ICT brings both risks and opportunities and the Programme Board overseeing the plan, and individual project managers, will assess these as part of their work.

7.6 Corporate / Citywide Implications

One of the four main priorities in the council's Corporate Plan 2011-2015 is 'modernising the council'. The work to develop ICT within Housing and the associated business processes will contribute to the council's aim to modernise.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Housing ICT Business Plan

Background Documents

1. Tenant & Resident Scrutiny Panel report on Housing Customer Service team