
REPORT TO:	HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM: 14
DATE OF MEETING:	24th NOVEMBER 2011	CATEGORY: DELEGATED
REPORT FROM:	DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES	OPEN: Open
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:	RICHARD KNOTT PERFORMANCE & BUSINESS MANAGER Ext 5940	DOC:
SUBJECT:	UPGRADE OF THE ORCHARD HOUSING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM	REF:
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	ALL	TERMS OF REFERENCE: HCS01

1. Recommendations

1.1 Members to approve the upgrade of Housing Services' arcHouse Housing Management system and associated expenditure.

2. Purpose of Report

2.1 To explain to members the reasons for, and benefits of, upgrading the Housing Management System.

3. Detail

3.1 Housing Services went live with the current version of the Orchard Information System's (OIS) arcHouse Housing Management System, more commonly known as 'Orchard' in early 2004. This system went live following a 2 year procurement and implementation stage.

3.2 This system is used as a database to store details of all current and former tenants as well as all current and disposed/sold properties and stock. The functionality in the system allows us to manage our Responsive Repairs and DLO areas of the service, as well as manage tenant rent accounts, arrears recovery processes, lettings and empty properties, property data, gas servicing processes and data. The system also provides valuable performance and financial monitoring information through its reporting tool.

3.3 During the last few years OIS have been developing an upgraded web based system called Orchard Housing which supersedes the current Windows based arcHouse version we use. Orchard will only provide support to the current version until December 2011 and have been migrating their customer base over the last 18 months. However should we commit to the upgrade support will be continued until such time as we go live with the upgraded version.

3.4 The upgrade utilises the same database of properties, people and data we store in the current system and does not require a full re-implementation. A short implementation stage will be required to install the new software, set up new

functionality and configure flexible areas of the system. This can be managed by the Housing Business Support Team.

- 3.5 Orchard Housing has been developed with the help of a number of housing organisations so the system has been built around the day to day experience of housing providers, rather than the standard approach of delivering a product the supplier believes customers require.
- 3.6 The upgraded system is deployed over the web so is not reliant on it being installed on the user's PC as is the case currently. This provides greater flexibility where it can be used and removes the requirement for an IT resource to install and upgrade to the next release (as happens several times a year). When a new release of the current software requires installing over 40 PCs require an individual upgrade.
- 3.7 The system comes with a number of optional features that would enhance the way we use the functionality and offer additional benefits to customers. The 'Customer Portal' provides a web link for tenants to view their rent accounts and/or report repairs on line. This provides a number of opportunities in providing access to our services at a time to suit the tenant and will reduce telephone calls for rent queries and reporting repairs.
- 3.8 The 'Community Action Module' provides the ability to map complex processes such as the reporting and management of Anti-Social Behaviour cases. It also provides enhanced performance monitoring of these processes, which are currently managed in an excel spreadsheet. This module also comes with the ability to store documents as images against person and property records which will provide instant display of documents that currently have to be retrieved from paper files.
- 3.9 There is no other company in the market place who can provide the necessary implementation skills to upgrade the system as an alternative to OIS. Another option is to go out to tender again and source a new system by an alternative provider. However the costs would potentially be over £300,000 and would mean at least a 12 month implementation phase.
- 3.10 We are currently satisfied with the existing system and upgrade proposals so there is no internal driver to source a new system and change suppliers.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 The total cost of the upgrade is £65,550 which includes software, licences, implementation and project management services, with a further £7,014 for support and maintenance per annum, to start when the upgraded system goes live.
- 4.2 The cost of the upgrade has been accounted for in the 2011/12 budget and Business Plan. The budget for the current year was approved by both the Housing and Community Services Committee and the Finance and Management Committee at their meetings in February 2011.

5. Corporate Implications

- 5.1 The proposed upgrade will ensure the Housing Service maintains an effective IT management system and therefore its services to customers.

6. Community Implications

- 6.1 The upgrade will provide greater access for customers to their rent information and will provide better services through enhanced system functionality.

7. Background Papers

- 7.1 None.