
REPORT TO:	COUNCIL	AGENDA ITEM: 22
DATE OF MEETING:	3rd JULY 2008	CATEGORY: DELEGATED
REPORT FROM:	HEAD OF HOUSING	OPEN
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:	Bob Ledger	DOC:
SUBJECT:	PURCHASE OF IT SOFTWARE TO SUPPORT CHOICE BASED LETTINGS AND HOMELESSNESS PROCESSES	REF: RL
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	ALL	

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 Suspend Contract Procedure Rules in respect of the tender requirement and enter into a contract with Abrisas Ltd to enable the introduction of a Choice Based Lettings (CBL) system in line with a government grant.
- 1.2 Extend the contract to include the purchase of the homelessness IT module.

2. Purpose of Report

- 2.1 To enable the purchase of appropriate IT software for the introduction of the new agreed process for allocating property known as, Choice Based Lettings.
- 2.2 To enable the purchase of a complementary homeless persons' module.

3. Background

- 3.1 The introduction of a Choice Based Lettings scheme for allocating Council owned property was originally approved by both Housing and Community Services Committee and Finance and Management Committee in August and September 2007. A subsequent update report was approved by Housing and Community Services Committee in April 2008.
- 3.2 An application for grant funding was made to Government for South Derbyshire to join the Derby City CBL process in the autumn of 2007 and shortly before Christmas this was announced as being successful in full i.e. we bid for £56,774 and this was the award we received. The grant is specifically for us to join the Derby system and not for any other purpose. The Council has also approved funding from HRA reserves of upto £60,000 to go alongside the grant i.e. a total budget of £116,774.
- 3.3 The Derby system uses an IT software product supplied by Abrisas Ltd i.e. if we are to join the Derby system we need to purchase from Abrisas rather than go down a traditional tender route.

- 3.4 It is therefore proposed to suspend the normal contract rules to allow the contract to be signed with Abris. The value of the Choice Based Lettings part of the contract will be £54,176 in year one (annual maintenance cost will be in the order of £14,000 and this is included in this figure for year one).
- 3.5 Homeless persons applications and the process around the processing of such applications is closely aligned to the allocations process (now to be done through CBL). All homeless person applicants also need to register on the Council's allocations system. If a rehousing obligation is accepted then the allocation of property will be done through the CBL system, but if not the applicant's main opportunity for social housing will be still through the CBL system i.e. either way the allocation and homeless persons processes are very closely linked.
- 3.6 Abris have a complementary software product to their CBL module that, if we adopted it, would make the processing of homeless persons' applications more straightforward and closely aligned to the allocations process. This would aid uniformity of process for staff and thereby save time and should ensure that applicants only fill one form in i.e. achieves efficiencies and improves service delivery. The cost of this product is £23,000 plus an annual maintenance charge of just under £4,000.
- 3.7 Each year (for 4 years now) the Council, in line with all Councils, has received a ring fenced grant to assist with homeless processes and where possible the prevention of homelessness. In 2008/9 this grant amounts to £45,000.

4. **Financial proposal**

- 4.1 At present the Council has set-aside upto £116,774 for the introduction of a CBL process, RSLs participating in the CBL process are to contribute £5,000 and of homeless government grant monies, approximately £4,000 remains uncommitted.
- 4.2 The proposal is to utilise these resources and purchase both the CBL and Homelessness modules from Abris at year one costs of £54,176 and £26,875 respectively.
- 4.3 The current budget profile is outlined below:

	Gov't bid estimate £	Projected out-turn £
CBL software	54,176	54,176
Project and IT management	41,000	27,500
Marketing, consultation and promotion	22,000	12,000
Staff training	2,000	2,000
Dissemination of good practice	2,000	2,000
Homelessness module	N/a	26,875
Staff training		500
Total cost estimate	121,774	125,051
	Resources available	125,774

- 4.4 Purchase of both the CBL and homelessness modules can be contained with existing approved budgets.

5. Corporate Implications

- 5.1 The introduction of the new CBL process is now well progressed with the supporting policy framework approved by Committee, initial consultation phase completed and agreement reached with all Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) in the District to join the process. The project is currently on schedule to hit the original implementation target date of 1st December 2008.
- 5.2 If this report is approved it will enable the contract with Abris to be signed and the implementation and therefore commitment to partners and customers to remain on-track
- 5.3 The homelessness module is complementary to the CBL process and will aid service delivery and the efficiency of back office functions

6. Community Implications

- 6.1 Choice Based Lettings provides a transparent allocations system that aims to improve customer satisfaction and support vulnerable groups.
- 6.2 The initiative is placed on the customer, but also provides an accessible source of information about the property and neighbourhood allowing for informed choices and better tenancy sustainment.