

14 September 2016

Environment and Housing Management Committee

Orchard Housing Software Upgrade

Report of: *Helen Gregory, Acting Head of Housing*

Wards Affected: *None*

This report is: *Public*

1. Executive Summary

1.1 This report sets out a business case for the upgrade of the council's Housing Management System, Orchard Housing.

1.2 A free upgrade of the software will benefit both customers and staff delivering the service due to the following reasons:-

- The new software has been developed to accommodate the latest housing legislation (eg U/C, RTB rules).
- It offers better functionality that will enable staff to communicate easier with customers due to new features.
- As the department currently run a very old unsupported version of the software, the supplier is not at present obliged to deal with support calls or 'bugs'. This would no longer be an issue and the risk would be removed.
- Better system security.

2. Recommendation

2.1 To grant delegated authority for the Head of Service to proceed with the upgrade of Orchard Housing.

3. Introduction and Background

3.1 The council's Housing Management system, Orchard Housing, is currently running on Service Pack 09. The system was last upgraded in 2013 and since then, the supplier has published 6 upgrades. Each version will include new features, bug fixes and enhanced performance. By delaying

the upgrade further, the council and its customers will not benefit from the improvements and at present, supplier assistance in cases of malfunction is limited as the version is unsupported.

3.2 The Orchard software is designed to maximise income collection, manage repairs, process housing applications, manage Right to Buy applications and is a central location for customers' contact details. The system therefore underpins the function of the Housing Services and the improvements within the new software will result in an improved service as part of the council's Transformation programme.

3.3 As part of the implementation, adequate training will be provided to all users. Staff will also be provided with unlimited access to an upgraded test environment to help with familiarisation. This will ensure that there is no disruption to the service after the system is upgraded.

4. Issue, Options and Analysis of Options

4.1 Option 1 – Carry out the upgrade
Option 2 – Do not upgrade

4.2 Option 1 will position the council's Housing Management system in line with modern software designed with recent legislation in mind, will provide a better service to customers and will allow staff to work more efficiently and increase productivity.

4.3 The option to upgrade will require necessary training for relevant staff.

4.4 Option 2 is not recommended because the lack of adequate vendor support poses a risk to the business. In addition, the department would not benefit from the improved functionality contained in the latest version of the software.

4.5 Proposed Timetable:

Action	Start Date	End Date
Organise site visits / supplier demo	08/08/2016	12/08/2016
Document business processes	22/08/2016	02/09/2016
Install new release on test environment	29/08/2016	02/09/2016
Create test plan	12/09/2016	16/09/2016
Functionality testing	26/09/2016	14/10/2016
Staff training	17/10/2016	11/11/2016
Upgrade live database and 'go-live'	03/12/2016	05/12/2016

5. Reasons for Recommendation

5.1 Assessing all the options, option 1 is recommended as the most advantageous option for the Council and supports the 'Getting our House in Order' transformation programme for the housing department. There are no additional costs for the software. This option would provide the following benefits:-

- Improved service to customers and more effective tools for staff
- Current software in line with current legislation
- Improved functionality will enable staff to communicate easier with customers due to new features
- More effective supplier support
- Increased system security
- Better software reliability

6. Consultation

6.1 Staff will be regularly consulted and will conduct visits to other Councils who have already successfully upgraded to the new version of Orchard to familiarise themselves with the new functionality and performance.

6.2 Tenants Talkback will be consulted.

7. References to Corporate Plan

7.1 Improving service delivery will meet the Council's commitment to service improvements and increased customer satisfaction.

8. Implications

Financial Implications

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There are no additional costs for the new software. The Council has a service level agreement with Orchard of £6,979 per annum which incorporates upgrades.

Legal Implications

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No direct legal implications arising, although implementation of the new software will broadly assist officers in complying generally with Housing legislative and regulatory requirements.

Other Implications

Risk Management

Risk	Probability (L,M,H)	Risk Reduction Actions
Loss of data	L	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure Daily backups are working correctly and check restore process
Service Delivery	L	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure business critical processes are identified and adequately tested• Ensure all staff are adequately trained
Staff Performance	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure all staff are adequately trained and are familiarised with the new system as early as possible
Loss to project of key staff	L	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify alternative resources in case of unexpected absence.• Investigate whether extra resources could either be involved or shadow any work dependent on a single member of staff
Bugs in new software version	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure business critical processes are identified and adequately tested• Conduct site visits and identify defects early in the process• Ensure supplier Issue Log is circulated

9. Background Papers

None

10. Appendices to this report

None

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