

This report will be made public on 11 April 2023

Report Number **C/22/110**

To: Cabinet
Date: 19 April 2023
Status: Non-decision
Responsible Officer: Andy Blaszkowicz
Cabinet Member: Councillor David Godfrey, Cabinet Member for Housing and Special Projects

Subject: Huume Housing Allocations and Housing Options System Update

SUMMARY: This report updates on work being carried out to transfer the Council's Housing Options and Housing Waiting List IT System between Locata, our existing Supplier, and our new supplier Huume.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

Cabinet is asked to agree the recommendations set out in this report because: -

- a) The Kent Homechoice Partnership has re-tendered the contract for the Kent wide housing options and housing waiting list system.
- b) The new system will be operational from July of this year and will be provided by Huume Housing Services.
- c) All new housing options and waiting list documentation will be stored in the new Huume system.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. To receive and note report C/22/110.

1.0 Introduction and Background

- 1.1 Kent Homechoice (KHC) is a partnership of 13 Local Authorities, 28 Housing Associations and KCC, set up to provide a Kent-wide housing allocations and housing options system, including a Choice Based Lettings System. The system also allows housing waiting list and homeless applicants to self-serve and update their housing waiting list and homelessness applications.
- 1.2 Following the completion of a comprehensive procurement process by Dover District Council on behalf of the partnership, the contract with our current system provider, Locata, finishes at the end of July 2023. The Housing Options and Case Management Teams are working with the Council's ICT and Digital teams to facilitate the transfer to the new system provider.
- 1.3 To enable the new system to be implemented it will be necessary to suspend the Allocations system during the period 1st June 2023 until 1st July 2023. During this short period, it will not be possible for vacant properties to be advertised through the choice-based lettings system. However, it will still be possible to allocate directly to any vacant properties that become available, in line with existing provisions within our current Housing Allocations Policy. This will ensure that there is no impact on the void turn-around times for vacant Council homes.
- 1.4 New waiting list applicants will not be able to apply online during the short suspension period but will be advised to contact the Council directly to manually have their applications added to the waiting list. The resource demands of this activity will be provided by the Housing Option, Case Management and Customer Services Teams. Information for existing waiting list and homelessness applicants will be automatically transferred from the current Locata system to the Huume system. This will minimise the overall impact on customers and overall service delivery.
- 1.5 The Housing Options and Case Management Teams will communicate directly with all current and future applicants so that they are fully aware of any action they need to take in respect of their application. The Teams will also work with the Council's Communications Team to communicate the changes through on-line and other media channels. They will also provide support to any applicants who require further assistance within their application.
- 1.6 Housing options and housing waiting list information (stored over the last 5 years) currently held in the Council's Corporate Civica System, will be moved and stored in the Northgate (NEC) system. The cost of this can be covered from the existing agreed Civica System closure budget resources. The information cannot be transferred to the new Huume System.
- 1.7 Going forward, all future housing options and housing waiting list information will be stored solely in the Huume system. All officers using the system will receive the necessary training to enable them to fully use the system and assist applicants

2.0 Resource Implications

- 2.1 There are no additional financial resource implications for the transfer to the new Huume System as the costs falls within the Council's existing Kent Homechoice budget. The contract will run for 4 years, with an option to extend for a further 2 years. The 2022/23 cost for the current Locata System was £14,027.14. The new Huume system will be a lower amount of £7,615.00 per year.

3.0 RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

- 3.1 A summary of the perceived risks is as follows:

| Perceived risk | Seriousness | Likelihood | Preventative action |
|---|-------------|------------|---|
| It is essential that the Council has an effective Housing Options and Waiting List System | High | Low | Implementation of the new Huume Housing System. |

4. LEGAL/FINANCIAL AND OTHER CONTROLS/POLICY MATTERS

4.1 Legal Officer's Comments (NM)

There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.

4.2 Finance Officer's Comments (RH)- the financial implications are within the body of this report (Section 3).

4.3 Diversities and Equalities Implications (AH)

There are no implications arising directly from this report.

4.4 Communications (AH) – The Project Team will communicate directly with all current and future applicants so that they are fully aware of any action they need to take in respect of their application. The Team will also work with the Council's Communications team to communicate the changes through on-line and other media channels.

4.5 Climate Change Implications (AH)- There are no implications arising directly from this report.

5. CONTACT OFFICERS AND BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

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The following background documents have been relied upon in the preparation of this report:

None.