

Report to: Executive Board - 11<sup>th</sup> November 2002

**MINOR PROJECT APPROVAL FOR HOUSING COMPUTER  
PROCUREMENT**

<p><b>Report of:</b> Customer Services Business Manager</p> <p><b>Report Author:</b> Jonathan Crouch Customer Services - Systems Support Tel no. 01865 252620 Email: jcrouch@oxford.gov.uk</p> <p><b>Lead Member Responsible:</b> Councillors Val Smith &amp; Bob Price</p> <p><b>Overview and Scrutiny Committee Responsibility:</b> Finance &amp; Performance Management.</p> <p><b>Key Decision:</b> NO</p>	<p><b>WARDS AFFECTED</b></p> <p><b>None</b></p>
<p><b>SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS</b></p> <p>Competitive tenders are being obtained for the acquisition of a suitable replacement computer to serve the Housing Management Information System. This report seeks minor project approval for the provision of a replacement computer in January 2003.</p> <p>Executive Board is asked to grant minor project approval in respect of the provision of the Housing computer replacement and recommend to Council to incorporate it into the capital programme.</p>	

1. **Background** - The Housing Management Information System (HMIS) is the main computer application utilised by the Housing Management Business Unit. The system is used to maintain tenants rent accounts, estate management, allocations and repairs. The HMIS application operates on a self contained UNIX platform based on a BULL Escala application server. The server was purchased approximately 4 years ago and started live operation in January 1999.

2. **Objective**

- 2.1. Generally computer equipment, such as an application server, has a working life in the region of 4 to 5 years at most. The present server is therefore nearing what is considered the end of its working life. This has been reaffirmed by recent software developments which identified the present server doesn't have sufficient capacity to operate the latest version of the HMIS application, 'I-World'.
- 2.2. At the end of 2003 the suppliers of HMIS will cease to support the version of software presently in operation at Oxford CC. The intention is to upgrade to 'I-World' by the beginning of November 2003. The upgrade of the application to 'I-World' alone is envisaged to take in the region of 6 months.
- 2.3. It is therefore necessary to commission a replacement application server at the beginning of 2003 in readiness for the upgrade to HMIS starting in May 2003.

### 3. **Current Position**

The suppliers of HMIS have provided a specification for the application server required for their latest version of HMIS, 'I-World'. As mentioned above the present server doesn't meet the capacity specified and has reached the age that a hardware upgrade is neither a viable or prudent option. Indicative costings for a suitable replacement are between £45k ~ £65k. Formal tenders are currently being sought.

### 4. **Description of the proposed project** - there are two distinct phases:

- 4.1. Firstly, to commission the actual hardware required. There are two preferred makes of application server available and both are familiar to Oxford CC. One is the same make as the existing server and the other is used as the computer platform for the Revenues & Benefits systems.
- 4.2. Once the hardware has been installed and configured the next stage will be to transfer the HMIS database from the old to the new server. This aspect is very much of a specialised nature that realistically will require the suppliers of HMIS to undertake. A costing for this aspect is £4,500.

### 5. **Options Available** - the two phases outlined in para. 4 can be sourced together from the suppliers of HMIS which may offer a smoother migration to the replacement server. Alternatively, if it proves more beneficial to source separately, the procurement of the actual hardware may be pursued via the GCat scheme. The GCat service is available to public sector organisations for IT & telecommunication products. It aims to reduce time and costs involved in the procurement process by offering a range of pre-tendered products.

### 6. **Staffing consequences** - None

7. **Financial Implications** - Since the implementation of HMIS an annual budget provision has been made to cater for on-going costs including an element for the periodical replacement of hardware equipment such as the main application server. The cost for the replacement server can be met from this provision. A financial profile is attached at Appendix 1
8. **Summary** - As outlined in para 2, the objective is to purchase and install a replacement application server with sufficient capacity not only to operate the new version of HMIS but also provide a solution for the next 4 to 5 years.

**THIS REPORT HAS BEEN SEEN AND APPROVED BY:**

Neil Gibson, Strategic Director  
Cllr. Bob Price, Information Systems Portfolio Holder  
Cllr. Val Smith, Housing Portfolio Holder  
Sarah Fogden, Devolved Accountant

**Background papers:**

None

**FINANCIAL PROFILE - Housing Computer Procurement**

**(A) Expenditure pattern compared to Provision in Capital Programme**

	2002/03	2003/04	TOTAL
	£	£	£
Expenditure for which approval is being sought	65,000		65,000
Provision in Capital Programme (funding available from earmarked reserve)	0		0
Provision required in Capital Programme	65,000	0	65,000

**(B) Subjective Analysis of Expenditure**

	2002/03	2003/04	TOTAL
	£	£	£
ESTIMATED PER THIS REPORT			
Replacement Server	65,000	0	65,000
TOTAL GROSS COSTS	65,000	0	65,000

**(C) On going Revenue Costs**

REVENUE COSTS	2002/03	2003/04	FULL YEAR COSTS
	£	£	£
Employee	0	0	0
Running Expenses	0	0	0
Capital Financing Cost	2,600	5,200	5,200
NET ADDITIONAL COSTS TO COUNCIL	2,600	5,200	5,200