

To: Cabinet
Date: 14 June 2023
Report of: Scrutiny Committee
Title of Report: Housing Management System Implementation

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To present Scrutiny Committee recommendations for Cabinet consideration and decision
Key decision:	No
Scrutiny Lead Member:	Councillor Lucy Pegg, Scrutiny Committee Chair
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Nigel Chapman, Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services and Council Companies
Corporate Priority:	All
Policy Framework:	Council Strategy 2020-24
Recommendation: That the Cabinet states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendations in the body of this report.	

Appendices	
Appendix A	Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee

Introduction and overview

1. The Scrutiny Committee met on 07 June 2023 to consider a report concerning the Housing Management System Implementation. The report, which is due for Cabinet consideration on 14 June 2023, recommends that Cabinet notes the lessons learned from the system implementation; approves the proposed settlement terms offered by the supplier as referenced in Appendix 4 (exempt from publication) and delegates authority to the Executive Director (Communities and People) in consultation with the Head of Financial Services and the Head of Law and Governance to finalise the terms; recommends to Council the approval of additional budget of £236,000 in 2022-23 as detailed in paragraph 8 of the report; and recommends to Council the inclusion of an additional budgetary amount of £497,000 of capital and £97,000 of revenue over the next 4 year period for the further development of the system (paragraphs 9-11 of the report).

2. The Committee would like to thank Councillor Chapman (Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services and Council Companies), Nigel Kennedy (Head of Financial Services) and Bill Graves (Landlord Services Manager) for attending the meeting to answer questions.
3. Members of the Audit and Governance Committee were invited to join the Scrutiny Committee meeting as non-voting members with speaking rights, given their particular interest in the implementation of the Housing Management System and in the interests of avoiding duplication at meetings. The Committee would like to thank Councillor Fry (Chair) and Councillor R Smith from the Audit and Governance Committee for attending the meeting to participate in discussion and ask questions.

Summary and recommendations

4. Councillor Nigel Chapman, Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services and Council Companies introduced the report. Implementation of the Housing Management System had been subject to significant business disruption and delay before the system reached 'business as usual' in November 2022. An external 'lessons learned' report (exempt) had been produced, which was summarised in Appendix 2 to the report, and re-enforced the need for project managers to have regard to the lessons learned when embarking on a project. The report also detailed proposals for the Council to further exploit the Housing Management System and outlined the budgetary implications surrounding this further development.
5. The Committee asked a range of questions, including questions relating to the implementation of the lessons learned, the timescales for further system exploitation, whether any further delays in the system implementation were anticipated, procurement, budget, disaster recovery and software implementation processes.
6. In particular, the Committee noted the significant disruption to system implementation as a result of data migration issues and wanted to understand whether the Council had processes in place to capture the system at a fixed point in time when it was working, so that if/when issues were identified the Council could abort further implementation and revert back to that fixed point in time and then continue implementation from the point at which the system was working. The Committee noted the response from officers that this process was not possible during the implementation of the Housing Management System, however the Committee was conscious that, without such a process in place, reoccurrences of similar issues in future projects of this nature were inevitable, which was not desirable. The Committee was of the view that the Council should have a contingency plan in place that allowed for work to be 'undone' when issues were identified, which would allow systems to revert back to a working point in time, without the need to lose significant amounts of work already undertaken or 'muddle through' issues where it was felt that too much work had been undertaken to 'start again'.

Recommendation 1: That the Council ensures there is a contingency plan when reaching a critical point in future projects, so that project implementation can be reverted back to an earlier 'working' status if it becomes clear that there are issues and/or errors with implementation.

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