

Report to: Housing Review Board



Date of Meeting 13th January 2022

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

Housing Management System Upgrade

Report summary:

The Council's Housing Service have investigated options for upgrading and modernising its Housing Management IT system in order to ensure our systems remain fit for purpose and able to meet the flexible and agile working needs of the service in the years ahead, and to enable and support the Council's obligations under the Social Housing White Paper 2021 and the Building Safety Bill 2021.

This paper sets out the proposed upgrade route, the implementation method and anticipated timescales, the high level benefits and risks, other options considered, and the costs of this proposal.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes No

Policy Framework Yes No

Recommendation:

- (1) That Housing Review Board note the proposed upgrade route for the Council's Housing Management IT system to Capita's One Housing and One Assets solutions.
- (2) That Housing Review Board note the additional capital and revenue budget requests of £134,927 and £6,060 respectively to implement this IT system upgrade.
- (3) That Housing Review Board recommend to Cabinet the proposed upgrade and budget requests.

Reason for recommendation:

The proposed solution provides a modern, flexible, and integrated system that meets the aims and objectives of the Housing Service at minimum cost, risk, and disruption to the organisation and to service delivery.

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Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- Climate Action and Emergency Response
- Coast, Country and Environment
- Council and Corporate Co-ordination
- Democracy, Transparency and Communications
- Economy and Assets
- Finance
- Strategic Planning

- Sustainable Homes and Communities
- Tourism, Sports, Leisure and Culture

Equalities impact Low Impact

Climate change Low Impact

Risk: Low Risk; The proposed upgrade and migration of Open Housing to One Housing and One Assets is low migration risk because both systems are known quantities to Capita, is low operational risk because the current Open Housing system will remain operational until full testing sign-off of the new systems is achieved, and low financial risk due to the fixed price terms of the proposed contract.

Links to background information N/A

Link to [Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

- Better homes and communities for all
 - A greener East Devon
 - A resilient economy
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Report in full

1. Current Situation

- 1.1 The Council's Housing Service currently use the Capita "Open Housing" housing management IT system to provide management and maintenance of its housing stock, estates, and tenancies, comprising over 4,200 rentable dwellings, over 700 garages, 160 leasehold (sold) apartments, and numerous other property assets.
- 1.2 The system was procured using an OJEU competitive tender in December 2013 on a perpetual licence, and for a minimum contract term of 5 years. System implementation ran through 2014 and 2015, and the system went operational from February 2016 providing an integrated Windows based solution replacing a patchwork of smaller 3rd party systems, Access databases, spreadsheets, and a legacy in-house Housing system.
- 1.3 Open Housing provides a core set of modules including Allocations, Rents, Repairs, Antisocial Behaviour, Right to Buy, and Contact Management. Whilst providing an integrated solution for these functions and a step change from what preceded, its desktop / Windows design and navigation systems are now showing their age, meaning use of the system is not as efficient as modern systems and this imposes practical limits to developing further cross-working and agile process design and working methods that are needed in order to remain an excellent service provider.
- 1.4 Whilst Open Housing provides repair, servicing, and programmed works functionality, the more stringent requirements of the Social Housing White Paper and the Building Safety Bill impose a greater rigor, governance, and data driven approach to the safety, maintenance, and improvement of the Council's Housing stock and our assets. These higher requirements, and the now even greater need to confidently evidence our compliance, maintenance histories, and data-driven decisions behind our improvement programmes mean these activities would benefit from a purpose designed Asset management solution.

2. Proposed Solution

2.1 In recognition of the developing market place and the need for their clients to work in a more dynamic and agile way, Capita have developed a new evolution of their Housing management solution, branded as “One Housing”. This builds on the success of their Open Housing product, providing enhancements to functionality, and significantly overhauling the user interface / the front-end look and feel, and user navigation through the system. One Housing is designed to be accessed through a web browser, making the system more accessible and able to be used remotely. The improvements to the look and feel, navigation, and ability for users to customise layouts and format displays and extract data more easily, make the system and information within it much more accessible and easy to use, and showcases the system’s integrated design. Capita launched One Housing for general release in September 2021, and offer the move from Open Housing to One Housing as a chargeable upgrade.

2.2 At the time of procuring Open Housing, a sister product was Open Assets providing a full function asset management solution with full integration to and from Open Housing. At the time of procurement, the core asset functionality within Open Housing was judged sufficient, and so the option (and time and cost) of implementing Open Assets was not pursued. However with the advent of the Social Housing White Paper and Building Safety Bill, the additional integrated functionality and stringent governance that an asset management solution would provide, are now very beneficial to meeting and demonstrating compliance with our new obligations. In parallel to developing One Housing, Capita have applied the same technology and design principles to their assets solution, now branded as “One Assets”. This new assets suite includes:

- Stock Condition
- Asset Register
- Planned Works
- Compliance Manager
- Asbestos Register
- Scheme Management
- H&S Rating Systems
- Scenario / Budget Planner
- All Housing Quality Standards
- Servicing
- RdSAP
- Developments
- Repairs and Maintenance

2.3 During 13th and 14th October 2021, Capita provided the Housing service with interactive demonstrations of their integrated One Housing and One Assets solutions, enabling Housing to evaluate these products. Each element of the two products was judged and scored against requirements and existing solutions in place. These scores were then assessed, with the results showing that both One Housing and One Assets exceeded requirements and expectations. Commercial negotiations with Capita then intensified through the remainder of October to ensure the Council receives best price and best value for money.

2.4 The proposed and recommended solution is therefore that Open Housing is upgraded to One Housing, and One Assets is purchased and implemented as a complimentary and integrated addition to One Housing.

3. Procurement Assurance

- 3.1 IT system procurement support and assurance is provided through our IT support provider, Strata Service Solutions Ltd.
- 3.2 Strata Procurement Support (“SPS”) have confirmed the Capita One Housing and One Assets products are available under the KCS (Kent Commercial Services) framework and the CCS (Crown Commercial Services) framework, both having an OJEU notice and a compliant route to market.
- 3.3 SPS support a direct award under these frameworks as providing the Council best value for money, supporting a new contract term of 5 years, with proviso that a procurement exercise and market testing is then undertaken when the new term approaches its end.

4. Implementation Method and Timescales

- 4.1 Installation of the new One Housing and One Assets solutions will be performed on new / different servers to the current Open Housing installation, and data migrated from the old Open Housing server to the new One Housing servers. This allows for an incremental and iterative installation, data migration, and testing process to be undertaken without disrupting the current service. Once fully installed, configured, tested, and staff have been trained, operation will then switch to the new environment.
- 4.2 The old Open Housing servers will be retained for a short period of time after go-live of One for contingency should an issue arise where the old system or data needs to be referenced, before these old servers are ultimately retired.
- 4.3 Due to the integrated design of the One Housing and One Assets products, these will be implemented, tested, and go-live in parallel to provide one integrated solution upon go-live.
- 4.4 Implementation, allowing for budget approval and various Council year-end processes, is anticipated to start mid-2022 aiming to be no later than 1st July 2022, with an expected go-live date during December 2022 – these timescales are subject to further detailed planning following contract award and may vary.

5. Benefits of Proposal

- 5.1 Benefits to the Council of upgrading its Housing management IT system to One Housing and implementing One Assets to provide an integrated solution include:
- Capability for improved flexible and mobile access to the system for staff.
 - Mobile Working – System access via a web browser enabling mobile use of the systems eg when visiting tenants homes.
 - Mobile Working – TotalMobile electronic forms, for use on tablets or smartphones, enabling data capture and updates in areas that do not have reliable mobile phone signal.
 - Improved efficiency, ease of use, and cross-working amongst teams through improved and easier access to information.
 - Improved Direct Debit processes, providing greater payment flexibility for tenants and streamlined admin processes for staff.
 - Improved tenant engagement, participation, and surveying capability – a requirement under the Social Housing White Paper 2021.
 - Enhancements to the Tenant Portal online 24 / 7 self-service facility including the improved survey and direct debit services. The Tenant Portal enables tenants to review and update their personal and household details; review their rent charges,

rent statements, and make payments; request and see their history of repairs; submit compliments and complaints; communicate with Housing teams; and provide sign-posting to other Council and online services.

- New embedded mapping functionality enabling staff to readily view the location of properties and ability to spatially search or select assets.
- Integration to CORE Digital to improve efficiency of statistical returns.
- Comprehensive and audited asset management including Stock Condition and Compliance Manager enabling improved processes, governance, and performance information – requirements of the Building Safety Bill 2021.
- Integrated works planning, budgeting, ordering, and invoicing processes within one system.
- Minimising risk while benefiting from step change usability and functional improvements by upgrading existing proven systems.
- Minimising cost, time, disruption, and re-training, through investment in improving and enhancing current systems to meet our new statutory obligations.
- One Housing and One Assets also has ability to allow secure and ring-fenced access to different sets of tenants and assets for different groups of users, thereby providing potential for these systems to be utilised by other service areas of the Council.

6. High Level Issues and Risks

Item	Description	Impact	Mitigation
1.	One Housing having been released in September 2021 is not yet a mature product and therefore may contain early faults that require fixing.	Low	The code-base and functionality of One Housing and One Assets is built upon the existing foundations of Open Housing and Open Assets, and therefore core functionality has not needed to be re-written. The proposed implementation start of mid-2022 and go-live Dec-2022 allows time for the product to be tested and proven with early adopters and any early issues to be resolved.
2	Implementation costs prove higher than initially quoted.	Low	Capita quotation is provided on a "Project Cost" (fixed price) basis. Variation to requirements (project scope) are considered unlikely because the Council is not implementing One Housing as a virgin installation, but is upgrading from its existing Open Housing system (a known quantity to Capita), and the Council is implementing the entire One Assets suite.

Item	Description	Impact	Mitigation
3	Implementation timescales overrun.	Low	Contract negotiations will include a detail planning phase to match resource requirements against resource capacity within Housing and Strata. This will set the implementation parameters and these will be routinely monitored by the Project Board throughout implementation. The fixed price nature of the contract also incentivises completion to plan.

7. Other Options Considered

Item	Option	Comments
1	Do not upgrade to One Housing and One Assets.	<p>Effectively the “do nothing” option. Risks and issues include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Challenges in meeting our obligations under the Social Housing White Paper and Building Safety Bill, needing to employ out-of-system solutions that are not joined up, are expensive and inefficient for staff, risk errors or omissions, and unable to demonstrate the Council operates robust integrated processes. b. Capita de-support of Open Housing is currently planned by April 2026, and will therefore require procurement and implementation of an alternative system before that time. <p>Conclusion: Not recommended.</p>
2	Upgrade Open Housing to One Housing, but use or purchase a different Asset management system.	<p>A key benefit of the proposed solution, and an operational requirement, is the seamless integration between the Housing and the Assets arms of the solution. An inextricable link exists between management of the tenancy, the tenant, and their rent and charges; and the responsive, planned, and programmed repairs and improvements to their dwelling. Whilst these two arms could be separated, the inefficiency and overhead this would place on all aspects of the Housing service would outweigh any savings achieved in system costs.</p> <p>Conclusion: Not recommended.</p>

Item	Option	Comments
3	Procure a different Housing and Asset management solution.	Procurement and implementation of alternative systems would be a large and expensive process involving significant business change. Indicative timescales and costs are likely £350k-plus for an integrated housing and assets solution, and indicatively 18-24 months end-to-end from start of procurement to go-live, meaning this option fails to satisfy the Council's White Paper and Building Safety obligations. Conclusion: Not recommended at this time.

8. Costs of Proposal

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
One Housing Upgrade from Open Housing Implementation Services *		32,063				
Annual Maintenance (continued from 2020/21) #	20,553	21,170	21,805	22,459	23,133	23,827
One Assets Purchase and Implementation						
One-time Licence Fee		36,000				
Implementation Services *		61,824				
Annual Maintenance #		6,060	6,242	6,429	6,622	6,821
One User Training (Train the Trainer) *		1,800				
TotalMobile and Insight Implementation *		3,240				
Existing Costs: Revenue	20,553	21,170	21,805	22,459	23,133	23,827
New Costs: Capital		134,927				
New Costs: Revenue		6,060	6,242	6,429	6,622	6,821
Cumulative New Costs		140,987	147,229	153,658	160,280	167,100

Notes:

* Implementation costs are quoted by Capita as a Project (fixed price) cost.

Annual revenue costs assume average 3% RPI uplift per annum.

Financial implications:

One of the core elements to the management of a Housing Revenue Account is to have a robust asset management strategy. One of the hindering factors to East Devon achieving this has been the legacy system. It is imperative that once the Stock Condition survey is underway the data can

be captured, utilised and further enriched so that all costs are allocated to stock to influence financial decision making.

Legal implications:

There are no legal implications on which to comment.