

**Report to:** **Housing Review Board**

**Date of Meeting:** 28 March 2019

**Public Document:** Yes

**Exemption:** None

**Review date for release** None



**Agenda item:** **22**

**Subject:** **Devon Home Choice Update**

**Purpose of report:** For information.

**Recommendation:** **That this report be noted by the Housing Review Board**

**Reason for recommendation:** This report is for information only.

**Officer:**

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**Financial implications:** Financial implications are contained within the body of the report.

**Legal implications:** There are no legal implications highlighted in the report.

**Equalities impact:** Low Impact

**Risk:** Low Risk

**Links to background information:** • .

**Link to Council Plan:** Living in this outstanding place.

## **1 Background**

- 1.1 East Devon District Council have been a member of Devon Home Choice (DHC) since 2010 and are represented along with ten other Local Authorities and Registered Providers (RP's) that make up the DHC Board.
- 1.2 In 2014 the DHC Board decided to change the software supplier from Abritras to Home Connections. This organisation currently provides the software platform that DHC operates from.
- 1.3 DHC is an online based housing register that enables individuals to register, then bid for suitable rented homes either with a RP or Local Authorities. DHC has been designed to

allow applicants to register on line or if necessary over the phone. It bands individuals into housing need, the highest being band A the lowest Band E. Band A is for those who urgently need housing whilst Band E is considered as having no housing need.

- 1.4 From EDDC's perspective, DHC is managed within the Council's Allocations Team which includes a dedicated DHC Officer in addition to other team members that process all enquiries and applications.

## **2 Devon Home Choice Housing Need Figures**

- 2.2 As of the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018 there were 3915 applications on DHC compared to 3361 at the same time the previous year. Currently there are 4654 DHC applicants looking for a home in East Devon. The aforementioned figures include Band E applications.
- 2.3 The figures below exclude Band E applications and show the number of bedroom's needed. The figures shown are from the 1<sup>st</sup> April of each year. The present day figure reflects the need so far this year.

<b>Band A – D only</b>				
	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4+Bed
Year				
April 17	911	396	160	104
April 18	977	408	212	116
Present	1183	461	271	153

- 2.4 The total number of properties that have been allocated so far this year is 445. Compared to the previous year's figure of 379. These figures include all allocations made by Registered Providers and East Devon District Councils.

## **3. Devon Home Choice Applicant Review**

- 3.1 The Council's Allocations Team are about to embark on a review of all applicants that have registered on DHC and have not either bid for a property or accessed their DHC records within the past twelve months. Emails and letters will be sent to all the applicants concerned. The applications will be cancelled if there has been no change to the application after 14 days. If necessary, the applicant can reactivate the application at a later date.

## **4. Devon Home Choice Software Review**

- 4.1 Due to repeated and ongoing issues with the current software provider a decision by the DHC Board has been made to source a new supplier. DHC Partners have continually experienced technical problems with the provider that includes lack of processing capacity, protracted periods when the system has failed completely and other day to day 'back office' operational issues.
- 4.2 The tender process is expected to start in March / April 2019. The new software provider will be in place before the current contract expires in May 2020.
- 4.3 At this time it's not clear as to the actual cost of switching to another provider. The DHC Board's reserves will cover any initial set-up costs incurred by the new provider. Currently EDDC contribute £1,000 per annum to the Board, plus £25 per advert that appears in the newsletter and online.

- 4.4 EDDC may have to contribute an additional amount to facilitate this new service, depending on the overall cost of employing the new software provider. As previously mentioned it is hoped that the DHC Board's reserves will meet any additional set up costs.
- 4.5 If additional funding is required then a further report will be presented to the Board.