

# **Briefing to Housing and Homes Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**Tuesday, 11<sup>th</sup> October 2016**

## **Housing Allocations Scheme: Update on Implementation**

### **Background**

Previous report to Housing Overview and Scrutiny:

- Provided overview of policy;
- Discussion on timeline and delays that have occurred in implementation;
- Identified the need to ensure that the IT solution is rigorously tested and fit-for-purpose before we begin re-registering current applicants and accepting new applications.
- Recognised the risks of launching a system without ensuring functionality, including:
  - Inability to use the IT solution to manage allocations – lack of capacity to operate a manual process;
  - Making allocations that do not reflect the agreed policy – for example, not shortlisting the correct applicants;
  - Tenancies not being properly set up – incorrect household/property details;
  - Potential rental income due to void loss for BCC and partner RPs;
  - Serious reputational damage.
- Confirmed the approach to complete testing before progressing to the next phase of the project.

### **Progress**

Since the previous report to Housing and Homes Overview and Scrutiny the following progress has been made:

- Commenced third phase of User Acceptance Testing – this phase requires 163 separate tests to be run. We have now completed 99.6% of all programmed tests (UAT 1-3). A total of c1200 separate tests – this gives an indication of how robust the testing has been.

- Produced a final Policy Document and Summary. These are currently being prepared for publication by Corporate Communications team.
- Completed and signed-off procedures. This is the more detailed operational guidance that staff require to implement and manage the scheme on a day-to-day basis.
- Commenced training the trainers – providing training to the team of officers who will then proceed to train the operational teams.
- Commenced training for providers – targeted initially at providers of supported accommodation who will need a detailed understanding of certain operational procedures.

## **Issues**

Serious issues were identified in the current testing phase regarding interfaces between the existing IT systems and the new allocations system. Testing identified issues in terms of the ability to robustly transfer data between systems. In particular, there were 2 very serious issues:

1. Unable to create new council tenancies.
2. Failing to properly transfer rent arrears and homeless status information. This is crucial because these factors help to determine eligibility and priority within the scheme. Also, an incorrect homeless status could lead to confusion about whether the local authority had properly discharged its homeless duties.

The interface issues were complex and the root causes were not easily identified. However, following extensive dialogue and work over a 4 week period with all parties the causes were successfully diagnosed and the solutions identified. Resolution of these interface issues was also delayed by absence of key personnel (both BCC and suppliers) over the summer period.

In addition to the more complex issues identified above, a larger than anticipated volume of other issues have been identified during this phase of testing. These can be classified as either “defects” or “change requests”.

- Defects – where the supplier has failed to develop a solution that meets the specification. The cost of fixing these lies with the supplier;
- Change requests – where the solution has been delivered as specified but through testing it is identified that it does not meet the business requirements. This may be as a result of poor initial specification or

because business processes have changed since specification. BCC is liable for the cost of change requests.

Every change request or defect triggers a process of fixing and re-testing. Usually problems are fixed first time but sometimes there is a lengthy cycle of fixing and testing until the issue is resolved. During this phase there have been 7 change requests that required system fixes. The cost of the change requests was £1550.

### **Next Steps**

The bulk of project resources are presently deployed on completing the current phase of testing. It is anticipated that this phase will cease by 14/10/16. At this point we will have successfully tested all of the individual elements of the system. However, we still need to test that the system works as an “end-to-end” process. This is called regression testing. Ideally we would re-run all 1200 tests. However, we need to be pragmatic and to balance risks against time and cost. To this end a more limited process of c260 tests is proposed. Once this is completed the IT solution can be signed off – triggering the start of re-registration. The attached plan sets out the indicative timescale. The revised timescale will result in additional project management (Service Birmingham and Supplier) costs – these have been estimated at c£8000.

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**Housing Allocations Project – Outline Project Plan**

<b>Monday</b>	<b>Friday</b>	<b>Re-reg week</b>	<b>IT workstream</b>	<b>Re-registration Workstream</b>	<b>Business Processes Workstream</b>	<b>Communications Workstream</b>
03/10/2016	07/10/2016	-17	Testing			
10/10/2016	14/10/2016	-16	Testing			
17/10/2016	21/10/2016	-15	Develop the regression pack and start scripting			
24/10/2016	28/10/2016	-14	Regression scripting			
31/10/2016	04/11/2016	-13	Regression data prep		Procedural training sessions	
07/11/2016	11/11/2016	-12	Regression testing and fixing			
14/11/2016	18/11/2016	-11				
21/11/2016	25/11/2016	-10				
28/11/2016	02/12/2016	-9				
05/12/2016	09/12/2016	-8				
12/12/2016	16/12/2016	-7	Sign off IT solution - board decision			
19/12/2016	23/12/2016	-6	Christmas weeks			
26/12/2016	30/12/2016	-5				
02/01/2017	06/01/2017	-4	TBC - 6 Jan 2017 Abritas to deliver working system	Recruiting agency staff		
09/01/2017	13/01/2017	-3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set up in Northgate</li> <li>• Upload and publish content of letters</li> <li>• Set up Resource Centre for Abritas</li> <li>• 13 Jan Service Birmingham to sign off system</li> </ul>	Recruiting agency staff		10 Jan - Full Cabinet briefing

16/01/2017	20/01/2017	-2	18 Jan - Extract phase begins - this lasts 9 days (1 day extract, 4 days data cleanse, sign off, load and return to Abritas)	Recruiting agency staff	Abritas user training- how to guides and system demo (2 days)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Re-reg briefings</li> <li>•Specialist provider training</li> </ul>
23/01/2017	27/01/2017	-1	Configure User roles for new staff (approx 33)	Set up office base for team		
30/01/2017	03/02/2017	0	1 February - letters start to be sent out	Induction week for re-reg team	Abritas IT training sessions commence (tbc)	Publish new scheme on website
			Begin re-registration	Begin re-registration	Begin re-registration	Begin re-registration
06/02/2017	21/04/2017	1		Re-registration Phase		
		11	20 April new Scheme implemented and new bidding cycle on CBL			