REPORT TO EXECUTIVE
Date of Meeting: 10th October 2017 and 17th October 2017
Report of: Director Bindu Arjoon
Title: STAFFING TO SUPPORT NEW HOUSING I.T. SYSTEM

Is this a Key Decision?

No

Is this an Executive or Council Function?

Council

1.   What is the report about?

1.1   This report sets out the business case for increasing the staffing provision (on a fixed term basis) to ensure that the new Housing Management I.T. system is introduced and implemented effectively.

2.   Recommendations:

2.1   That Executive recommends that Council approves that:

3 x new posts are added to the Council's establishment to include the additional posts of a Housing System Team Lead and Housing System Officers (x 2) on a 23 month fixed term basis.

3.   Reasons for the recommendation:

3.1   The current Housing Management I.T. system is now over 20 years old. This system provides modules in relation to repairs and maintenance, rent accounting and arrears, tenancy and void management. It is used by up to 130 members of staff across Landlord Services, Payment and Collections, Council Tax (billing) and Customer Access.

3.2   In order to provide a suitable and efficient service to all our customers (tenants, contractors, local residents etc) we require the use of one integrated system which contains all necessary data (property, rent, tenancy, finance, contractor etc) and which can be accessed easily by all staff whether office based, working remotely or based out and about in the city.

3.3   Working with Strata Service Solutions and following budgetary approval from Members the decision has been taken to replace Capita (the current system) with OPENHousing. This new system will provide a new comprehensive more integrated software system, improve the functionality of the system and assist staff to access and update data more speedily.

3.4   Given the costs involved of the new system and the need to ensure we fully benefit from its introduction and use it is considered necessary to bring in additional resources on to the establishment to ensure we get the best functionality, make sure of its effective introduction and continue to maintain and update/ improve the system going forward.

4. What are the resource implications including non- financial resources.

4.1 Housing, working with Strata Service Solutions identified and procured the new system at a costs of £269,378. This costs has already been budgeted for and agreed in approved budget reports.

4.2 The requested additional resources would be to establish a Housing I.T. System Team Lead and 2 x Housing I.T. System Officers on a 23 month fixed term basis. These posts would be job evaluated but we anticipate that they would be graded in the region of a grade 10 and 7 respectively. The estimated increased staff costs per year would be as follows:

- 1 FTE at Grade 10 (subject to JE)

- Salary   £32,486
- On-costs   £8,316
- Total   **£40,802**

- 2 x FTE at Grade 7 (subject to JE)

- Salary   £46,796
- On-costs   £11,980
- Total   **£58,776**

- Total **£99,578**

4.3 There are no increased hardware costs associated with this proposal.

4.4 We will be required to purchase a license for each of the servers which will host the database. The SQL Server Standard Core All Language SA Pack MVL 2 License core License will costs £1,209.34 per annum (2 x £604.67).

4.5 The council's legacy PABX analogue phone system will be replaced by digital Skype for Business telephony. This will be available to all users of the Global Desktop meaning staff can receive and make calls from wherever they are logged on. This change in telephony systems is already budgeted by each of the 3 partner councils

5. Section 151 Officer comments:

5.1 Having invested in a new system, it is critical that the Council ensures that there is sufficient support to enable the smooth implementation, including ensuring that the appropriate interfaces with other critical systems are developed and tested. The costs, if approved, will be added to the HRA medium term financial plan.

6. What are the legal aspects?

6.1 None identified

7.   Monitoring Officer's comments:

7.1   The content of this report raises no issues for the Monitoring Officer.

8.   Report details:

8.1   The business case and background for the establishment of these posts is set out in the Business case (Appendix A).

8.2   It is essential that the introduction of the new Housing Management I.T. System is implemented effectively to ensure that the council maximizes the initial outlay of £269,378 for the new system providing systems that are integrated and maximizes a productive and flexible delivery of the wide ranging services provided within housing.

8.3   Details of the current and revised structure are set out in Appendix B & C respectively.

8.4   This request for this additional staff provision will not impact any other employees in the Housing Customer team apart from offering them additional support and ability to concentrate on the main focus of their roles.

8.5   A copy of the job description and personal specification are set out in Appendix D.

9.   How does the decision contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan?

9.1   The content of this report is consistent with the following corporate objective of providing high quality, value for money services.

10.   What risks are there and how can they be reduced?

10.1   There are no risks involved in making this decision. It is a greater risk that we do not provide adequate resources in order to implement the new system effectively. Thus reducing the positive impact we believe this I.T. system will have on the delivery of services to tenants and leaseholders of the Council.

11.   What is the impact of the decision on equality and diversity; health and wellbeing; safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults, community safety and the environment?

11.1   We believe that this decision will have a positive impact in this aspect. It will allow us to hold more data in one place that will be accessible to all elements of the service and be able to act upon information about our clients (such as protected characteristics) and adapt the delivery of our services accordingly.

12.   Are there any other options?

12.1   One potential option is for the implementation of this new system could be absorbed within the current establishment. However, this would detract from officers across a number of areas being able to deliver on their primary roles and would potentially impact on the delivery of key services such as debt collection, ASB and repairs.

Director Bindu Arjoon