



<b>Service Delivery Committee</b>	<b>Tuesday, 05 July 2016</b>	<b>Matter for Decision</b>
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**Title:** **Choice Based Lettings Options**

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## **1. Introduction**

The Council operates a Housing Register and Choice Based Lettings system in partnership with 6 other Leicestershire boroughs which is used to advertise vacant Council and Housing Association properties.

The initial 5 year partnership has ended and Members are being asked to make a decision on the following:

- Whether Oadby & Wigston Borough Council wishes to remain part of the Leicestershire Choice Based Lettings Partnership
- If remaining in the partnership, the authority needs to decide whether it wishes to operate a different lettings policy.
- If remaining in the partnership, the partners need to decide whether they will purchase an upgrade of the existing Abrisas system or procure an alternative system

## **2. Recommendations**

It is recommended:

- 2.1. To remain in the partnership and to continue to amend the common lettings policy to fit the needs of the Borough effectively creating a specific Oadby & Wigston policy
- 2.2. To agree a timetable and to work with partners to achieve progress.
- 2.3. In the event the partnership cannot be maintained or if the timetable cannot be achieved Members are asked to grant the Senior Management Team authority to form a smaller partnership or to pursue independent action.

## **3. Background**

### **3.1. The Partnership**

The partnership was formed in 2010 and has subsequently produced a Common Housing Allocations Policy, an internet based Housing Register and Choice Based Lettings platform based on software provided from Abrisas and has undertaken a number of revisions to the system.

Though the formal partnership agreement is ended the partnership is continuing whilst decisions are made by each Council around the future of the scheme.

### **3.2. The Common Lettings Policy**

We have already varied the initial policy to better address the emerging needs in the Borough. These changes will likely continue and any new or upgraded system must cope with Oadby & Wigston's variance from the Common Lettings Policy.

### **3.3. The Software**

The current software was purchased via a framework agreement in 2010 and we have never upgraded from version 6. The current system is difficult to interact with using tablet and other mobile devices and is inherently inflexible.

In 2015/16 we paid £7600 for ongoing service, support and licensing, this increases annually.

Contract exemptions were sought and obtained in 2014, 2015 and 2016 and under procurement rules only one further exemption is permitted in 2017 before a procurement exercise must be carried out.

The upgraded or new software package must be implemented by June 2018.

## **4. The Options for Change**

The partnership has soft market tested 5 current market leading solutions including an upgrade to the existing system. Several fulfil anticipated need.

Costs are difficult to scope until it is known how many partners will proceed to procurement. At present Oadby & Wigston Borough Council effectively pays one seventh of the total cost, there may be opportunities to reduce this proportion due to our small size.

An upgrade of the existing system will cost at least £25000 plus additional costs associated with improvements and training. Oadby & Wigston Borough Council's share would depend on the number of partners. Our individual ongoing costs would likely remain around £8000pa.

A whole new system for the partnership would cost between £40000 - £50000 split between partners, though ongoing costs for new systems are around £4000-£5000pa per partner.

In the event the Council decided to take an independent route the costs would be an estimated £15000 for the system and £4500 annually.

## **5. The Timetable**

With 7 potential partners with different processes and no one Council identified as a lead authority the need to maintain a firm timetable is essential.

The following milestones are suggested:

July 2016	The Council notifies partner Councils of an intention to remain in the partnership subject to this timetable.
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October 2016	Deadline for Councils to decide the membership of the new
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	partnership
December 2016	Policy review begins
March 2017	Consultation on policy changes end
June 2017	Output specification sent to IT providers for quotation
July 2017	Deadline for quotations
September 2017	Award of contract
February 2018	Product development commences
March 2018	Notice issued to Abritas bringing current contract to an end
May 2018	System testing
June 2018	Go live

This timetable provides the flexibility to pursue an independent solution from May 2017 which will be achievable by April 2018.

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<b>Implications</b>	
<b>Financial</b> [CR]	Failure to act will breach financial regulations within 2 years.
<b>Legal</b> [AC]	CR2 - Key Supplier/Partnership Failure. CR4 - Reputation Damage.
<b>Risk</b> [SN]	Not applicable as this is a change in supplier, the policy remains unchanged.
<b>Equalities</b> [SN]	None anticipated given the ending of the partnership.
	Equality Assessment
	<input type="checkbox"/> Initial Screening <input type="checkbox"/> Full Assessment <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable