

# BARNESLEY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

This matter is a Key Decision within the Council's definition and has been included in the relevant Forward Plan.

## REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PLACE TO CABINET

### Berneslai Homes IT Upgrade of Repairs and Maintenance System

#### **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 This report seeks the approval to release earmarked capital and revenue funding which has been set aside for Berneslai Homes IT developments.

#### **2. Recommendations**

**It is recommended that:**

- 2.1 Cabinet approve the release of earmarked funding to Berneslai Homes for IT developments.

#### **3. Introduction**

- 3.1 Berneslai Homes are seeking to replace the current IT system which is used for the management of repairs and maintenance tasks for Council Housing.
- 3.2 This development will also allow for the improvement and automation of job allocation to front line repairs operatives which will deliver greater efficiencies.
- 3.3 Berneslai Homes will enhance the digital offer to tenants and improve the way repairs can be reported online at a time which suits tenants. An aim is to give greater transparency which will reduce the number of calls handled by the call centre.
- 3.4 Business Cases have been prepared and a Project Board formed of key stakeholders from both BMBC and Berneslai Homes.
- 3.5 The costs associated with the project will be contained within the earmarked IT improvement capital budget envelope of £2 million and the £100,000 annual revenue budget.
- 3.6 Berneslai Homes currently use SAP Plant Maintenance for managing repairs and maintenance tasks associated with the upkeep of Council owned homes.
- 3.7 For many years, Berneslai Homes have been aspiring to modernise the customer journey, experience and service which customers receive, particularly when reporting a repair. As far back as 2013 we worked closely with Barnsley MBC's IT Team, on its then Customer Services Programme, which identified a range of improvements including reporting and tracking of repairs online.

- 3.8 Due to constraints with the use of SAP, there has been little progress on delivering major changes for tenants who are accessing the repairs and maintenance service.
- 3.9 BMBC IT is fully supportive of the move from the current system and is supporting Berneslai Homes with the change.
- 3.10 Berneslai Homes are seeking to implement an integrated housing management and repairs system to reduce the complexity of systems used and so there is a single customer and property record. Data accuracy is vital when dealing with building compliance issues such as gas and electrical safety.
- 3.11 The service needs to have an improved digital offer and tenants need to receive information and updates digitally. The current system has restricted progress in this important area.
- 3.12 Importantly, the change will also enable the implementation of new elements including a dynamic scheduling system which is important for Berneslai Homes to be competitive under the new Property Repairs and Improvement Partnership (PRIP) contract. The scheduling system has its own Business Case but will also be funded from the identified IT development budget.
- 3.13 In support of the Council's strategy, we will also be looking to move systems from the BMBC data centre and into a cloud environment.
- 3.14 The decommissioning of SAP, for repairs and maintenance, would positively impact on amongst others:
- Logging of repairs at the Call Centre and in the back office
  - Dealing with enquiries regarding repairs by both BH and BMBC staff
  - Scheduling of the repair visit
  - Management of maintenance tasks such as gas servicing
    - Allocation of work via the mobile app (as this is built on an SAP system)
  - Recording of financial information including time and cost
  - Stores and procurement
  - Reporting, performance management and business intelligence
  - Interfaces with other key stakeholder's systems including PRIP partner, Wates.
  - Location of data as it moves from the Barnsley Data Centre to a cloud environment.

#### **4. Proposal & Justification**

- 4.1 The critical nature of this service is leading us to seek an off the shelf system which has been tried and tested by other organisations.
- 4.2 There is a clear need and opportunity to redesign the service and bring customers to the centre of that design.

- 4.3 Working in collaboration with BMBC IT, we can greatly enhance the online service offer, improve customer communication, give greater transparency to the service and increase the productivity of the workforce.
- 4.4 Our preferred approach would be to extend the use of the current Housing Management System, provided by Northgate Housing. Their system is modular, meaning we could build from the existing and well embedded core. As a second phase we would look to fully assess the requirements of asset management with the aim of bringing that into the one system.
- 4.5 Berneslai Homes are working alongside BMBC IT so that tenants will be able to report a repair from within the Council's borough-wide customer portal. This is currently under development as part of the #Digital First programme.
- 4.6 Existing technology will be reused where possible including the council's automation software, customer portal and Berneslai Homes' mobile devices. We will seek other opportunities to work with existing council technology such as the chat bots used within the call centre.

## **5. Implications for local people / service users**

- 5.1 The introduction of a new integrated housing management and repairs system will bring benefits for tenants. Developments in the mobile application, improved scheduling of repairs and increased communication with tenants along with greater visibility of planned work will all be positive outcomes. Improved real-time information will allow for better planning and a greater understanding of service user needs.
- 5.2 The digital service offer will be enhanced, and greater choice will be given to tenants about when and how they report their repair.
- 5.3 It should be noted that whilst the digital service offer will be improved, full consideration will still be given to ensuring that those tenants who are less digitally savvy can 1) access support to enable them to become more digitally connected, should they so wish, or 2) continue to report their repairs via their preferred communication route (hotline/via HMOs where appropriate).

## **6. Financial Implications**

- 6.1 Consultations have taken place with representatives of the Service Director – Finance (S151 Officer).
- 6.2 The proposal by Berneslai Homes to upgrade the repairs and maintenance systems consists of two elements. The first, is a customer focussed journey improvement which will allow tenants to order repairs through an on line portal, the second is a dynamic scheduling system which will utilise operatives' handheld devices with a more efficient workload planning system.
- 6.3 It is expected that the new system will generate efficiencies within the HRA through a more efficient deployment of Berneslai Homes resources to deliver the PRIP contract.
- 6.4 It is expected that the new system will record and collate the historical repairs and capital component replacements accurately against each individual

property, linking directly with the Council’s asset management software, PIMSS. This is to ensure that the condition information on the Council’s housing stock is regularly refreshed to give officers a comprehensive understanding on an ongoing basis. Furthermore, this will ultimately ensure a more effective approach to the Council’s 30 year HRA business plan and will intelligently inform future investment programmes in the Council’s housing stock.

- 6.5 The estimated cost of the capital project [purchase and implementation of the system] totals £2.0M. These resources have been previously approved as part of the 2020/21 HRA Budget Planning process that were submitted to Cabinet in December 2019 (Cab.11.12.2019/6 refers).
- 6.6 Berneslai Homes have estimated the project will be implemented over a 3 year period commencing in the 2021/22 financial year. The expected profile of the expenditure is detailed in the table below.

Capital Project Profiled Expenditure	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	Total
Licensing	£391,000	£80,000	£80,000	<b>£551,000</b>
Professional Services / Set-up	£694,650	£446,850	£307,500	<b>£1,449,000</b>
<b>Year Total</b>	<b>£1,085,650</b>	<b>£526,850</b>	<b>£387,500</b>	<b>£2,000,000</b>

- 6.7 The ongoing revenue implications [maintenance and cloud hosting etc.] are estimated to cost £0.1M per annum from 2021/22, incurred within the HRA. These resources have been previously approved as part of the 2020/21 HRA Budget Planning process that were submitted to Cabinet in December 2019 (Cab.11.12.2019/6 refers).
- 6.8 The financial implications relating to this proposal are shown in Appendix A.

7. **Legal Implications**

- 7.1 Procurement rules will be followed and BMBC procurement is supporting Berneslai Homes in this area.

8. **Employee implications**

- 8.1 There are no direct employee implications, at this time. However, it should be noted that a wider review of customer contact and the call centre is under review. The IT projects are being developed in consultation, and with consideration to, the wider corporate review. Whilst dynamic scheduling and upgrades to the repairs and maintenance system will ultimately create efficiencies and avoidable contact, it is not currently known if this will result in reductions to staff within the call centre; as the volume of current calls across the board often exceeds capacity.

## **9. Communications implications**

- 9.1 There are no direct communications implications arising from this report. There will be a robust communications plan implemented as part of the project management process.

## **10. Consultations**

- 10.1 Consultations have been undertaken with BMBC IT, finance, procurement and other housing providers; alongside the Council's Capital Oversight Board, DMT, SMT and Portfolio Holder. Robust consultations have taken place between BMBC IT and Berneslai Homes and the appropriate Service Director forms part of the Project Board.

## **11. The Corporate Plan and the Council's Performance Management Framework**

- 11.1 The Berneslai Homes Strategic Plan 2021-31 strategically aligns with the Council's Corporate Plan for Barnsley 2030 and Housing Strategy (2014-33) contributing to the provision of high quality homes for social rent; investment in the borough and council assets; supporting people to manage tenancies, live independently and 'achieve'; and assist in the delivery of housing growth in promoting economic growth.

## **12. Promoting Equality & Diversity, Social Inclusion & Tackling Health Inequalities**

- 12.1 Berneslai Homes assists the authority in providing quality housing provision for those households on low incomes and vulnerable service users who cannot secure suitable housing privately.
- 12.2 Ensuring that Council owned homes are well managed and maintained to a high standard of decency, is an important factor in tackling health inequalities in the borough.

## **13. Climate Change & Sustainability – Zero Carbon**

- 13.1 There are little implications for and contributions to Zero Carbon at this stage. However, cloud hosting has been shown to be more energy efficient and Northgate Housing, if selected, are developing internet of things technology which may contribute at a later stage.

## **14. Risk Management Issues**

- 14.1 Risks including data security, successful project delivery and disruption to service delivery will all be considered as part of the project.

## **15. List of Appendices**

Appendix A : Financial Implications

## **16. Background Papers**

Berneslai Homes Repairs System Business Case

DRS Business Case

If you would like to inspect background papers for this report, please email [governance@barnsley.gov.uk](mailto:governance@barnsley.gov.uk) so that appropriate arrangements can be made

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