

Finance and Resources Committee

10.00 am, Thursday 17 March 2016

Waivers – Homelessness Information System (HIS) and Edinburgh Common Client Outcomes (ECCO)

Item number	7.19
Report number	
Executive/routine	
Wards	

Executive summary

This report seeks members' approval for waivers allowing the extension of contracts to deliver the Homelessness Information System (HIS) and the Edinburgh Common Client Outcomes (ECCO) system. These are databases which support homelessness and temporary accommodation management, and the service delivery and contract management of homelessness prevention services.

HIS and ECCO are both stand-alone and bespoke databases supporting a number of complex and essential services, and they require to be replaced.

A project to migrate these functions onto Council supported systems has been progressed over the last year, however, implementation has been delayed.

Links

Coalition pledges	P8
Council outcomes	CO10 , CO16
Single Outcome Agreement	SO2

Waivers – Homelessness Information System (HIS) and Edinburgh Common Client Outcomes (ECCO)

Recommendations

It is recommended that Finance and Resources Committee:

- 1.1 notes the requirement for a further two year waiver for Niceworks Ltd to provide technical support for the Homelessness Information System (HIS) to April 2018, while the ICT support transitions to the new Northgate modules
- 1.2 notes the requirement for a further two year waiver for Gallery Partnership for the provision of Edinburgh Common Client Outcomes (ECCO) to April 2018, while the IT support transitions to the new Northgate modules
- 1.3 agrees to progress a two year waiver for both Niceworks Ltd in respect of the HIS database and Gallery Partnership in respect of ECCO.

Background

- 2.1 The HIS system has been in place since 2000 to manage homelessness cases. The database has been developed significantly over the last 16 years to fit the needs of homelessness and temporary accommodation services.
- 2.2 The HIS system supports the management of:
 - data from homelessness assessments, housing advice and housing options activity
 - management of all homelessness and temporary accommodation cases
 - temporary accommodation stock management and contract management, including turnaround processes for Council-run services and contract management for commissioned services
 - allocation of customers and income collection for emergency, temporary and medium-term accommodation (including B&B rooms; short-term lets in the private sector; Private Sector Leasing (PSL); supported hostels and managed units; dispersed Council-owned and Registered Social Landlords flats)
 - storage of personal belongings, removals and kennelling of pets
 - statutory homelessness and housing support statistical returns to the Scottish Government.
- 2.3 The HIS system was not designed to integrate with any Council core system. The long-term goal is to have all service critical data on a supported Council

system. In light of these drivers, a project team has been established to deliver a replacement system for HIS.

- 2.4 The HIS system is covered by a maintenance agreement, which expires on 31 March 2016. The waiver for this was agreed at Finance and Resource Committee on 19 March 2015.
- 2.5 The maintenance agreement is currently with Niceworks Ltd which owns the intellectual rights to the database coding, but the Council retains the rights to the data.
- 2.6 The monitoring of homelessness prevention services has been undertaken through Edinburgh Common Client Outcomes (ECCO) under contract with the Gallery Partnership since 2007. Like HIS, this is a stand-alone system outwith the current Council ICT contract.

Main report

- 3.1 The HIS system supports the allocation and management of the temporary accommodation estate, including Private Sector Leasing, Bed and Breakfast service, dispersed flats, hostels and managed units. The HIS system also manages the financial accounting for the service, which amounts to over £30 million per year in both expenditure and income collection. However, HIS does not integrate with other Council systems and there is a need to move to a supported Council system.
- 3.2 A project has been established to deliver a replacement for the HIS system, which also incorporates ECCO, and appropriate project governance arrangements in place.
- 3.3 Staff from across the Assessment, Homelessness and Support team and the Commissioning Team have been involved in scoping and shaping the functionality of the new system. BT carried out an analysis of the functionality required and Northgate was identified as the preferred supplier to replace HIS. Northgate is an existing provider of ICT systems supporting housing services.
- 3.4 The project plan developed by Northgate and BT proposed an initial “go live” date of 7 December 2015, with the project completing on 7 January 2016. It was identified as a significant risk that this timescale was ambitious, due to the complexity of the service, the scale of staff numbers affected and the value of income affected (requiring a prudent approach).
- 3.5 Unfortunately, several weeks of slippage occurred due to the quality of the initial design workshops led by Northgate, which led to the “go live” date being moved to 16 March 2016, taking the date very close to the BT/CGI transition.
- 3.6 Due to the complexity of the HIS/Northgate transition, this posed an unacceptable risk to the existing Northgate modules and the “go live” date required to be postponed.
- 3.7 Transition will now require to be slotted into CGI’s work schedule and this is unlikely to be possible before autumn 2016.

- 3.8 The current waiver for the maintenance and support of HIS runs until April 2016.
- 3.9 It is anticipated that HIS will have transitioned to Northgate by April 2017, but the HIS database will require to be maintained for a further year to allow for storage of historic data required for returns to the Scottish Government and for effective case management of services for vulnerable people who may present as homeless on more than one occasion.
- 3.10 The timetable for moving ECCO requirements for externally commissioned homelessness prevention services to Northgate is also delayed to autumn 2016 at the earliest. This will necessitate a further waiver for Gallery Partnership to allow the continuation of hosting and supporting ECCO for the period April 2016 to April 2018.
- 3.11 As the Northgate system will not be fully in place, tested and operating by April 2016, a further Niceworks waiver is required for April 2016 – April 2018.
- 3.12 Failure to agree to extend these contracts would result in the Council no longer having a software maintenance agreement in place for HIS or ECCO. The impact of which is that the Council would be unable to:
- record and manage effectively statutory homelessness duties
 - assist and accommodate vulnerable people in temporary accommodation efficiently
 - manage temporary accommodation and Private Sector Leasing housing stock and rent collection for temporary accommodation properties
 - manage a number of multi-million pound contracts for various forms of temporary accommodation efficiently
 - collect income efficiently
 - make statutory returns to the Scottish Government
 - manage homelessness prevention commissioned services efficiently.

Measures of success

Measures of success are set out below.

- 4.1 A system fully supported by the new ICT contractor CGI.
- 4.2 A fully integrated system, which benefits from increased data sharing across the Council.
- 4.3 Staff not having to record customer records in more than one place.

Financial impact

- 5.1 The one-off cost to purchase the additional five Northgate modules is £169,393. These costs were met within 2014/15 budget.

- 5.2 The annual charge for the HIS system is £26,744, which can be contained within existing budgets.
- 5.3 The annual cost of maintaining ECCO is £31,260 + VAT, which can be contained within existing budgets.

Risk, policy, compliance and governance impact

- 6.1 The HIS system provides essential case management support for all homelessness cases, approximately 4000 households present for homelessness services each year. Failure to extend the waiver (1 April 2016 – 1 April 2018) may put vulnerable people at risk.
- 6.2 The key risk in not approving the Niceworks Ltd waiver extension to April 2018 is that there would not be a valid maintenance agreement in place for HIS and the Council does not have access to the technical coding to put in place alternative support arrangements, which means there would be no contingency if the HIS system were to fail at a time when the service is still reliant on it.
- 6.3 If the system failed, with no maintenance agreement in place, there would be significant financial risk to the Council, as the HIS system manages the financial accounting for the temporary accommodation service, which amounts to over £30 million per year in both expenditure and income collection.
- 6.4 As Niceworks Ltd owns the codes for the HIS database, and there is a plan in place to move from the HIS system to Northgate as soon as practical, there would be a low risk of challenge from another provider.
- 6.5 If ECCO ceased to function beyond April 2016 the piloting of Payment by Outcomes as a major feature of Advice and Support services (and other work streams) would be in jeopardy.

Equalities impact

- 7.1 This report is an update on an existing provision. There is, therefore no direct equalities impact. The proposed replacement arrangements have been subject to an Equalities Impact Assessment.

Sustainability impact

- 8.1 There are no sustainability impacts arising from this report.

Consultation and engagement

- 9.1 Communication has gone out to all HIS users to advise of the transition to Northgate. Key staff and 'superusers' will continue to be involved in the build, design and testing of the system as the project moves forward. A communications plan has been developed to keep all affected staff and commissioned services updated as the project progresses.

Background reading/external references

http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/3633/finance_and_resources_committee

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Links

Coalition pledges	P8 – Make sure the city’s people are well-housed, including encouraging developers to build residential communities starting with brownfield sites.
Council outcomes	CO10 – Improved health and reduced inequalities. CO16 – Well-housed – People live in a good quality home that is affordable and meets their needs in a well managed Neighbourhood.
Single Outcome Agreement Appendices	SO2 – Edinburgh’s communities are safer and have improved physical and social fabric.