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GOSPORT
Borough Council

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17 August 2022

S U M M O N S

MEETING: Extraordinary Housing Board
DATE: 25 August 2022
TIME: 6.00 pm
PLACE: Council Chamber
Democratic Services contact: Linda Coote

PAUL GRANT
BOROUGH SOLICITOR AND MONITORING OFFICER

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD

Chairman of the Policy and Organisation Board, Councillor Chegwyn (ex-Officio)

Councillor Ms Ballard (Chairman)
Councillor Herridge (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Cox
Councillor Durrant
Councillor Hutchison

Councillor Jessop
Councillor Beavis

FIRE PRECAUTIONS

(To be read by the Chairman if members of the public are present)

In the event of the fire alarm sounding, please leave the room immediately. Proceed downstairs by way of the main stairs or as directed by GBC staff, follow any of the emergency exit signs. People with disability or mobility issues please identify yourself to GBC staff who will assist in your evacuation of the building.

IMPORTANT NOTICE:

- If you are in a wheelchair or have difficulty in walking and require access to the Committee Room on the First Floor of the Town Hall for this meeting, assistance can be provided by Town Hall staff on request.

If you require any of the services detailed above please ring the Direct Line for the Democratic Services Officer listed on the Summons (first page).

NOTE:

- i. Councillors are requested to note that, if any Councillor who is not a Member of the Board wishes to speak at the Board meeting, then the Borough Solicitor is required to receive not less than 24 hours prior notice in writing or electronically and such notice shall indicate the agenda item or items on which the member wishes to speak.
- ii. Please note that mobile phones should be switched off or switched to silent for the duration of the meeting.
- iii. This meeting may be filmed or otherwise recorded. By attending this meeting, you are consenting to any broadcast of your image and being recorded.

AGENDA

1. **APOLOGIES FOR NON ATTENDANCE**

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

All members are required to disclose at this point in the meeting or as soon as possible thereafter, any disclosable pecuniary interest or personal interest in any item(s) being considered at this meeting.

3. **DEPUTATIONS - STANDING ORDER 3.4**

(NOTE: The Board is required to receive a deputation(s) on a matter which is before the meeting of the Board provided that notice of the intended deputation and its object shall have been received by the Borough Solicitor by 12 noon on Tuesday 23rd August. The total time for deputations in favour and against a proposal shall not exceed 10 minutes)

4. **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

(NOTE: The Board is required to allow a total of 15 minutes for questions from Members of the public on matters within the terms of reference of the Board provided that notice of such Question(s) shall have been submitted to the Borough Solicitor by 12 noon on Tuesday 23rd August)

5. **Procurement of Locata HPA2 support module for the Housing needs and Advice Service (Pages 5 - 8)**

To seek the Board's approval to waive the requirements within the Council's Contract Procedure Rules for the procurement of a module to provide system support, updates and enhancements to the Housing Needs and Advice case management system, Locata.

6. **Procurement of a Domestic Abuse Housing Advocate (Pages 9 - 12)**

To seek the Board's approval to waive the requirements of the Council's Contract Procedure Rules for the procurement of a Domestic Abuse Housing Advocate, who will be employed directly by Southern Domestic Abuse Service. The Domestic Abuse Housing Advocate will be working within GBC's Housing Service providing specialised support in respect of the Council's dedicated

accommodation and advice service to victims of domestic abuse under the terms of a Service Level Agreement.

7. **Procurement of a Rent Guarantor Service** (Pages 13 - 16)

To seek the Board's approval to waive the requirements within the Contract Procedure Rules for the procurement of a rent guarantor scheme with RentGuarantor Ltd. to assist customers that are homeless, or threatened with homelessness, to access private rented accommodation.

8. **ANY OTHER ITEMS**

Board/Committee:	Extraordinary Housing Board
Date of meeting:	25 August 2022
Title:	Procurement of Locata HPA2 support module for the Housing Needs and Advice service
Author:	Head of Housing
Status:	For Decision

Purpose

To seek the Board's approval to waive the requirements within the Council's Contract Procedure Rules for the procurement of a module to provide system support, updates and enhancements to the Housing Needs and Advice case management system, Locata.

Recommendation

That the Board approves the procurement of the Locata HPA2 support module for a two year period with the option to extend for a further two years in increments of one year.

1.0 Background

- 1.1** The introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (HRA) placed new legal duties on local housing authorities and amended the existing homelessness legislation set out in the Housing Act 1996.
- 1.2** The HRA (enacted in April 2018) places prevention at the heart of homelessness service delivery and has introduced new duties on local housing authorities to intervene earlier and work to prevent and relieve individuals' homelessness, whether or not they are in priority need.
- 1.3** These duties include an enhanced prevention duty extending the period a household is treated as threatened with homelessness from 28 days to 56 days, meaning local housing authorities are required to work with people to prevent homelessness at an earlier stage; and a new duty for those who are already homeless so that local housing authorities will support households for 56 days to relieve their homelessness by helping them to secure accommodation.
- 1.4** The HRA also introduced the duty to refer. This placed a new duty on other public agencies to refer people who they believe to be homeless or threatened with homelessness to local housing authorities. This duty to refer aims to ensure services work together effectively to ensure people's housing needs are considered when they come into contact with public bodies, intervening at the earliest opportunity to prevent homelessness.
- 1.5** With the introduction of the HRA, the government also introduced new data reporting requirements for local housing authorities through the new

Homelessness Case Level Information Classification (H-CLIC) reporting system. H-CLIC is a case-level data collection system which replaces the older P1E data collection method.

1.6 The move to H-CLIC and case specific information has meant more meaningful data is available to central government, local authorities and their partners to better understand the needs of homeless households, improve policy-making and evaluate the effectiveness of interventions.

2.0 Report

2.1 All local authorities received an equal share of £3m funding to support IT upgrades or otherwise support the transition from P1E to H-CLIC. This equated to £9202 per local authority.

2.2 The council's existing software provider, Capita, was unable to capture homelessness data in the required format to meet the government's new reporting requirements following the introduction of the HRA, and had no plans at that time to introduce new modules to coincide with the change in reporting methodology.

2.3 After reviewing the market, the council entered into a contract with Locata Housing Services Ltd in 2018 for a two year term with the further option to renew annually for up to two years, to develop a bespoke case management system that would fully meet the requirements of the HRA, including H-CLIC exporting and reporting, and provide ongoing system support, updates and enhancements.

2.4 Whilst Capita has now developed its own module in response to the HRA requirements, this is not a tried and tested product. The purchase of any new software would involve extensive testing to determine its effectiveness, at a cost to the Council, including the transfer of existing data and the retraining of staff to use the new system.

2.5 Current pressures on the Housing Needs and Advice service, in addition to the new duties of the HRA, include the additional work following Covid-19 and the Everyone In initiative, as well as the increasing demand from dealing with the Afghan and Ukrainian refugee situation. Therefore, this is not an ideal time to consider changing essential software systems.

2.6 Locata software is embedded and working well to provide the information we need. A four year contract will allow sufficient time for other software solutions to be fully tried and tested, with the Council being in a better position to fully review the market in three years' time, taking advantage of any significant advances made to competitive software.

2.7 The contract now needs to be renewed for a further two years plus the further option to renew annually for up to two years, at a cost of £8,000 plus VAT per annum.

The total contract value for a four year term is £32,000 plus VAT, therefore Board approval is required to make a direct award, in accordance with the council's contract procedure rules.

- 2.8** The new contract is offered with no increase to current costs, and these will be met by the council's Homelessness Prevention Grant.

3.0 Risk Assessment

- 3.1** The Locata system is required on a daily basis to manage all homelessness casework. As well as provide reports on homelessness statistics, the system holds data on active and closed homeless cases. Ongoing system support is essential to ensure continued service delivery and compliance with the requirements of the HRA.

- 3.2** Capita does not provide a comparable system, therefore Locata remains the council's preferred option for homelessness case management and reporting.

- 3.3** The contract will be kept under review with the council comparing the existing system and costs against those of other suppliers as new systems are developed to ensure continued value for money.

- 3.4** The reported data provides a local and national picture of homelessness, and supports grant funding applications. Not being able to provide H-CLIC data will negatively impact on future grants, and funding bids to support new interventions and initiatives.

- 3.5** The costs for the Locata software are well under Threshold levels for open market competition so there is no risk of a procurement challenge against a direct award.

4.0 Conclusion

- 4.1** Locata provides an essential homelessness case management and reporting system, ensuring the council can report on all statutory homelessness assessments in accordance with the requirements of the HRA. The data is used to understand the level of homelessness both locally and nationally, inform policy-making, support grant funding and bids for new interventions.

- 4.2** The contract needs to be renewed for a further term to ensure the system remains supported and benefits from any updates and enhancements.

- 4.3** The Board is therefore asked to approve the renewal of the contract by direct award as detailed in section 2.7 of the report.

Financial Services comments:	Contained within the report
Legal Services comments:	Contained within the report
Equality and Diversity:	None
Climate Change implications:	No implications; no IIA required since no procurement of material goods, or policies or services that would influence relevant behaviours, are proposed.
Crime and Disorder:	N/A
Corporate Plan:	The Locata software will ensure services are delivered effectively and efficiently.
Risk Assessment:	Contained within the report
Background Papers:	None
Appendices:	None
Report Author/Lead Officer:	Julie Smith

Board/Committee:	Extraordinary Housing Board
Date of meeting:	25 August 2022
Title:	Procurement of a Domestic Abuse Housing Advocate
Author:	Head of Housing
Status:	For Decision

Purpose

To seek the Board's approval to waive the requirements of the Council's Contract Procedure Rules for the procurement of a Domestic Abuse Housing Advocate, who will be employed directly by Southern Domestic Abuse Service. The Domestic Abuse Housing Advocate will be working within GBC's Housing Service providing specialised support in respect of the Council's dedicated accommodation and advice service to victims of domestic abuse under the terms of a Service Level Agreement.

Recommendation

That the Board approves a direct award to the value of £49,500 to Stop Domestic Abuse to facilitate the employment of a Domestic Abuse Housing Advocate, for a two-year fixed term to undertake the duties and work detailed in the report.

1.0 Background

1.1 Local authorities have an important part to play in tackling domestic abuse, alongside partners in health, education, the police and wider services. In Hampshire, domestic abuse support services are commissioned by the Tier 1 authority, Hampshire County Council (HCC), and in 2019, Stop Domestic Abuse (SDA), a charity specialising in support services for those affected by domestic abuse, were awarded the contract to deliver Refuge and Outreach Services across Hampshire on a five year + two basis.

1.2 SDA are commissioned to run all 10 refuges across Hampshire, providing 192 bed spaces for victims, with accommodation for up to 124 children. Within the refuges, SDA provide the support around domestic abuse, in addition to specialist support for victims with mental health issues, substance misuse, and those with no recourse to public funds.

1.3 SDA also deliver the Front Door Service in the form of the advice line, which provides a single point of contact for victims, perpetrators and professionals to access domestic abuse services and advice.

There are also several community-based services provided by SDA which include specialist high-risk support, outreach, and services to children and young people.

1.4 SDA are also commissioned to provide target hardening services in the East of the County, which covers Gosport. This includes providing safety planning and security advice to victims, as well as supplying and fitting basic window and door alarms.

SDA has a strong relationship with the Blue Lamp Trust, based in Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service, and can refer victims into this scheme if additional security measures are required.

2.0 Report

2.1 Following the introduction of the Domestic Abuse Act in April 2021, the government carried out a new burdens assessment to determine the additional costs that local authorities will incur as a result of this change.

2.2 The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) has provided £125m to cover the cost of new burdens placed on local authorities to carry out their statutory duties and functions relating to the provision of specialist support to victims and their children within domestic abuse safe accommodation, as set out in Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act.

2.3 This funding is on the understanding that it is used for revenue expenditure relating to Part 4 of the Act on Tier 1 local authorities, and that Tier 2 authorities co-operate with Tier 1 authorities as far as is reasonably practical.

2.4 The Council, along with all other local authorities, has signed up to a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with DLUHC. The purpose of the MoU is to formalise the working relationship and expectations relating to the payment from DLUHC to councils to enable them to fulfil the functions of the new statutory duties.

While the document is not a legal or binding agreement, all parties enter into the MoU committing to honour the obligations within it.

2.5 In accordance with the terms of the MoU, it has been agreed that the Tier 1 authority, HCC, will delegate commissioning decisions to all Tier 2 authorities in the county, together with their appropriate share of the funding.

Gosport Borough Council's allocated share of this funding is £63,200 for a two year period.

2.6 The Council already has a property held in its housing stock for the purpose of providing dispersed safe accommodation for families fleeing domestic abuse, and whose circumstances are such that refuge accommodation is unsuitable.

All referrals into this accommodation are made in conjunction with the commissioned service provider, Stop Domestic Abuse.

2.7 In partnership with HCC, it has been agreed the Council's grant allocation will be used to fund a dedicated Domestic Abuse Housing Advocate to

provide dedicated intensive support and advocacy to adult victims of domestic abuse in the Council's own safe accommodation. Dedicated support will also be provided for the children and young people in the family, together with holistic family-centred support to the whole household.

- 2.8** The Domestic Abuse Housing Advocate will also be an ambassador, based within the Council's Housing Needs and Advice service, delivering bespoke training sessions for officers, and providing specialist advice and a drop-in service for the wider community.

In addition, the Advocate will link in with Domestic Abuse Champions working in other district and borough councils across Hampshire to establish a Practitioner Forum, led by HCC.

- 2.9** The Council would like to fund a post directly within Stop Domestic Abuse, as this additional resource will complement the commissioned services already in place, and will provide opportunities to access additional flexible funding opportunities directly with HCC.

Therefore, approval is required to make a direct award to Stop Domestic Abuse, waiving the requirements of the Contract Procedure Rules which otherwise confirm a competitive process should take place

3.0 Risk Assessment

- 3.1** Providing the right support for victims of domestic abuse is a priority for the Council. It is important we are able to provide dedicated, specialist support for families fleeing domestic abuse that live in the Council's own dispersed accommodation.

- 3.2** HCC has delegated authority to the Council to utilise their share of the new burdens funding to commission relevant services, and this money must be spent by March 2023

The new burdens grant will fund a full-time post on a two-year contract. Stop Domestic Abuse will support this post as a permanent role, and in the event no further funding is available beyond the two year term, they will continue to finance this post within their own organisation.

4.0 Conclusion

- 4.1** HCC has delegated authority to the Council to use new burdens funding to commission appropriate services to meet its statutory duties and functions relating to the provision of specialist support to victims and their children within domestic abuse safe accommodation, as set out in Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act.

- 4.2** The Council would like to utilise the funding to commission a dedicated post, for a two-year fixed term, within Stop Domestic Abuse, to provide dedicated intensive support and advocacy to the adult victim of domestic

abuse, and their children, in the Council's own dispersed safe accommodation.

- 4.3** Stop Domestic Abuse are already commissioned by HCC to provide a range of domestic abuse services across the county, and funding this additional post will complement the provision already in place by providing a consistent approach to supporting victims and their families, as well as opportunities to access additional, flexible funding directly from HCC.
- 4.4** If further funding is not available beyond the initial two-year term, Stop Domestic Abuse has committed to financing this post on a permanent basis within its own organisation.
- 4.5** The Board is therefore asked to approve a two-year service level agreement to Stop Domestic Abuse by direct award, as detailed in the report.

Financial Services comments:	Contained within the report
Legal Services comments:	Contained within the report
Equality and Diversity:	None
Climate Change implications:	No implications; no IIA required since no procurement of material goods, or policies or services that would influence relevant behaviours, are proposed.
Crime and Disorder:	This will positively contribute towards community safety
Corporate Plan:	The Domestic Abuse Housing Advocate post will ensure services and initiatives are delivered efficiently, and will assist the council to further develop partnership working with Stop Domestic Abuse and other councils across Hampshire.
Risk Assessment:	Contained within the report
Background Papers:	None
Appendices:	None
Report Author/Lead Officer:	Julie Smith

Board/Committee:	Extraordinary Housing Board
Date of meeting:	25 August 2022
Title:	Procurement of a rent guarantor service
Author:	Head of Housing
Status:	For Decision

Purpose

To seek the Board's approval to waive the requirements within the Contract Procedure Rules for the procurement of a rent guarantor scheme with RentGuarantor Ltd, so as to assist customers that are homeless, or threatened with homelessness, to access private rented accommodation.

Recommendation

That the Board approves the procurement of a three year contract with RentGuarantor Ltd with the further option to renew annually for up to two years.

1.0 Background

- 1.1** The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (enacted in April 2018) places prevention at the heart of homelessness service delivery, and has introduced new duties on local housing authorities to intervene earlier and work to prevent and relieve individuals' homelessness by helping them to secure accommodation.
- 1.2** Nationally, there is a shortage of social housing, and there are currently 647 households on the Housing Register in Gosport. Many customers can expect long waiting times before a suitable social housing property becomes available.
- 1.3** It is not possible for local authorities or registered providers to meet all housing need, and not all customers needing help with housing are eligible to join the Council's Housing Register. In these cases, private renting is often the only option available, but many households struggle to access homes let by private landlords.
- 1.4** This is because the up-front costs of private renting can be high, with tenants expected to pay a deposit and up to six month's rent in advance. These costs are a real barrier for those households on low incomes, or who are reliant on welfare benefits. In addition, landlords and letting agents are most likely to ask these households for a guarantor, i.e. someone who will agree to pay their rent if it is not paid, before they will offer them a tenancy.
- 1.5** Whilst the council can provide assistance with deposits and rent in advance, it cannot act as a guarantor for those households that are unable

to secure a guarantor in their own right.

- 1.6 The need for a guarantor scheme became particularly evident during the Covid-19 pandemic when the housing service needed to find move-on accommodation for those that were accommodated temporarily in the welfare pods. Landlords and letting agents were not prepared to offer tenancies to these clients, many of whom were vulnerable and had complex needs, without a guarantee that their rent would be paid.
- 1.7 During the height of the pandemic, the housing service worked with RentGuarantor Ltd, a company that acted as a guarantor for tenants who were unable to secure their own guarantors, providing greater security for those landlords prepared to offer tenancies to this client group.

Through this scheme, the housing service was able to assist 64 individuals into private rented accommodation, in what was a particularly challenging time in the private rented sector.

- 1.8 The housing service would like to build on this success and continue working with RentGuarantor Ltd to enable more homeless households, or those threatened with homelessness, access accommodation in the private rented sector.

2.0 Report

- 2.1 Following the moratorium on evictions during the Covid-19 pandemic, and the uncertainties private landlords face with the proposed abolition of 'no fault' eviction notices, there is a real risk some landlords will move away from the private rented sector altogether, reducing the amount of housing available for people who cannot afford to buy their own home or access social housing.
- 2.2 Therefore, the housing service needs to be able to incentivise landlords to assist homeless households, or those threatened with homelessness, to access much-needed rented accommodation, in what is already a very competitive market. Being able to offer a rent guarantee to private landlords is one way in which this can be achieved.
- 2.3 RentGuarantor Ltd.'s scheme offers private landlords peace of mind and greater security in the event a tenant fails to pay their rent, guaranteeing rent payments for up to twelve months. As a direct result, landlords are agreeing to twelve month tenancies, as opposed to six month tenancies, providing more stable housing for customers and additional benefit to the council.
- 2.4 In the event a tenant defaults and legal action is taken to recover possession of the property, the scheme manages and pays all eviction costs.

The scheme also guarantees up to £10,000 compensation for accidental or

malicious damage by tenants.

2.5 RentGuarantor Ltd.'s fee varies dependant on risk, size of the property, rental charge and household size, but the average cost is between £250-£500.

2.4 The housing service worked with RentGuarantor Ltd. throughout the pandemic, when significant additional demand was placed on the service, and RentGuarantor Ltd. provided an excellent service. They demonstrated that their scheme can assist clients with complex needs to secure private rented accommodation in a very challenging environment, and the Council wishes to build on this relationship and continue working with them.

2.5 The total contract value for five years is £150,000 plus VAT, therefore Board approval is required to make a direct award, in line with the council's Contract Procedure Rules.

2.6 All costs will be met by the Council's Homeless Prevention Grant.

3.0 Risk Assessment

3.1 A rent guarantor scheme is required to assist homeless households, or those threatened with homelessness, with no recourse to other guarantors, to access private rented accommodation. Being able to offer a rent guarantor scheme not only helps customers, it enables the housing service to continue to build relationships and trust with private landlords, in conjunction with our Move-On Co-ordinator role funded through the Rough Sleeper Initiative.

3.2 Officers compared the market and there are no other companies that offer the level of service provided by RentGuarantor Ltd, in particular accepting customers with a poor credit history and offering accidental or malicious damage cover up to £10,000. Therefore, RentGuarantor Ltd. remains the council's preferred option for providing a rent guarantor scheme for homeless households, or those threatened with homelessness.

3.3 The contract will be kept under review with the council comparing the service and costs against those of other suppliers when the private rented market is more settled, to ensure continued value for money.

4.0 Conclusion

4.1 The housing service worked with RentGuarantor Ltd. throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, at a time when additional demand was placed on the service. The scheme was an invaluable homeless prevention tool which helped facilitate a move from temporary accommodation into the private rented sector for many vulnerable customers.

4.2 The housing service has developed an excellent working relationship with RentGuarantor Ltd. and can demonstrate that this scheme provides value

for money.

- 4.3** A rent guarantor scheme is required to help homeless households, or those threatened with homelessness, who have no recourse to other guarantors, access private rented accommodation.
- 4.4** The Board is therefore asked to approve the direct award of a contract to RentGuarantor Ltd. as detailed in the report.

Financial Services comments:	Contained within the report
Legal Services comments:	Contained within the report
Equality and Diversity:	N/A
Climate Change implications:	No implications; no IIA required since no procurement of material goods, or policies or services that would influence relevant behaviours, are proposed.
Crime and Disorder:	None
Service Improvement Plan implications:	Link with the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and Action Plan
Corporate Plan:	Ensure services and initiatives are delivered efficiently.
Risk Assessment:	<i>If the risk assessment is extensive you may choose to add a further section to the report to cover this off and refer in this box to that section [shown in section 3 by way of example]</i>
Background Papers:	None
Appendices:	None
Report Author/Lead Officer:	Julie Smith