

# Arun District Council

<b>REPORT TO:</b>	<b>Housing and Wellbeing Committee – 10 September 2024</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Housing management system update – Civica CX Housing and Abrisas</b>
<b>LEAD OFFICER:</b>	<b>Sasha Hawkins – Business Improvement Manager</b>
<b>LEAD MEMBER:</b>	Councillor Carol Birch, Chair of Housing and Wellbeing Committee
<b>WARDS:</b>	<b>All</b>
<p>This report supports the following areas of the corporate vision:</p> <p>Improving the wellbeing of Arun</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support those who are homeless, street homeless or at risk of homelessness in emergency temporary accommodation to improve health outcomes.</li> </ul> <p>Delivering the right homes in the right places</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support households with complex needs to secure suitable accommodation.</li> <li>• Ensure the existing housing stock in the district (private sector and council owned) is maintained to a high standard.</li> <li>• Continue to bring empty homes back into use for the benefit of the community.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>DIRECTORATE POLICY CONTEXT:</b></p> <p>The Civica CX Housing and Abrisas system implementation is a capital project to deliver a new integrated housing management system. The project was split into two phases, with phase 1 going live in June 2024.</p> <p>Civica CX Housing and Abrisas will improve residents access to our services and allow more opportunities for residents to self-serve. It will provide increased efficiencies in respect of replacing paper and manually intensive processes.</p> <p>This will support officers in the work they do allowing us to give an improved customer experience for our residents, it will also give greater oversight of day-to-day activities in housing ensuring we are meeting service requirements.</p> <p>Our Resident Engagement Strategy has a specific aim ‘Engage Digitally’. The implementation of a customer portal through this project will help us to utilise and develop digital platforms to provide effective two-way communication with our residents.</p>	

**FINANCIAL SUMMARY:**

Please find below the latest financial position of the budget for the housing management system project which highlight the project is as per budgets.

<b>Budget</b>	<b>1,756,000</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>	<b>1,271,000</b>
Gave a balance of	485,000
<b>Commitments:</b>	<b>485,000</b>
<b>Balance</b>	<b>0</b>

Committed expenditure is for our internal project team, external project management, and for phase 2 requirements. Further budget will be required for the 2025/26 financial year predominantly for our internal project team, and external project management which take us to the point of go live in Summer 2025, this amount will be determined as part of our budget setting process carried out later in the year.

Our Property, Estates and Facilities department make a financial contribution to the ongoing maintenance and hosting of the system.

**1 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To provide Members with an update on the implementation of Civica CX Housing and Abrisas. Our new integrated housing management and choice-based lettings system.
- 1.2 To provide Members with details on Phase 2 of the project and estimated timeline

**2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Housing and Wellbeing Committee
  - 2.1.1 Note the contents of the report.
  - 2.1.2 Note the timeline for Phase 2 of Civica CX asset management and Abrisas

**3 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 3.1 This report provides Members with an update on the implementation of Phase 1 of our housing management and choice-based lettings system.
- 3.2 Our housing management system Civica CX Housing went live on 3 June 2024 and our choice-based lettings system Abrisas went live on 8 July 2024.
- 3.3 The new system delivers an improved customer experience, our tenants will have more opportunities to self-serve and our staff are saving time on processes that were previously manual allowing them more time to spend on delivering front line housing services.

- 3.4 Both systems have been well received by staff and continue to be embedded across the service and allow us to modernise our ways of working.
- 3.5 Our new tenant and leasehold portal 'Arun from Home' had a soft launch in August 2024 and will give our residents greater opportunity to self-serve and access information related to their tenancy or lease.
- 3.6 Phase 2 of Civica CX Asset and Abrisas have commenced with a projected go live of Summer 2025.

## **4 DETAIL**

4.1 We entered a contract with Civica UK Limited in 2021 for the delivery of Civica CX and Abrisas choice-based lettings and homelessness.

4.2 Our internal project team and external project management support have worked closely with Civica to deliver Phase 1 of the project.

### **4.3 Civica CX Housing**

4.3.1 Phase 1 of Civica CX Housing went live on 3 June 2024, and this included the following modules

- a) Repairs
- b) Contractor portal
- c) Voids
- d) Rents
- e) Anti-social behaviour
- f) Case and tasks
- g) Customer relationship management
- h) Communications
- i) Right to buy
- j) Tenant portal
- k) Reporting
- l) Forms
- m) Financial interfaces

4.3.2 Phase 1 also included data migration, a process allowing our data to be moved from our old housing management system into the new one. This is a common process in any large system implementation and allows staff to have access to our historic data in the new system.

4.3.3 The internal project team at Arun is made up of staff seconded onto the project from Property and Estates and the Business Improvement Team. These officers have been instrumental to the successful delivery of the system. This team configured the system with support from Civica, ensuring it met our requirements as a service.

- 4.3.4 We also have external project management and technical support which has assisted us in our delivery of the project and ensured good progress and outcomes for the implementation of CX housing and Abrisas.
- 4.3.5 User acceptance testing was carried out before we went live with assistance from staff from across the service, which ensured that we tested our processes and data before launching the new system.
- 4.3.6 A training programme spanning four weeks was delivered ahead of our go live date, which ensured staff gained familiarity with the system, and learnt how to navigate the different modules.
- 4.3.7 After going live, the Business Improvement Team provided in person support, along with further training sessions to help support and embed the new system across the service.
- 4.3.8 Staff across the service have done extremely well in picking up a new system, and embracing new ways of working and we are already seeing some of the benefits of the new system, as detailed below.
- 4.3.9 The system and our new ways of working will continue to be bedded in throughout this year.

#### 4.4 **Benefits**

- 4.4.1 Civica CX housing is easier to navigate, more user friendly, and intuitive for our staff, allowing better visibility of our data in the system.
- 4.4.2 The system is also hosted which has given us a significant improvement on performance time, and remote performance has also improved. For example, some processes in our previous system used to take minutes to run, whereas these now run in seconds.
- 4.4.3 Our weekly batch processing used to take hours, and this now takes minutes. It has been a fundamental difference noticed by our support teams, and our users.
- 4.4.4 A fully integrated system for income recovery, providing officers with prompts on which arrears accounts to review, and capturing within the system all actions taken when dealing with arrears cases.
- 4.4.5 Case management allows officers to record progress with a wide range of cases and tasks, such as anti-social behaviour, tenancy sustainment, financial inclusion. Service level targets are then set against tasks, prompting officers and managers via a dashboard of how many cases are on target, close to overdue or overdue.
- 4.4.6 This allows more oversight on case management, makes it easier to assign workflow if someone is on leave or unwell, and gives better visibility of service demand.

4.4.7 More of our processes can now be built in the system via case management, removing the need to administer processes via spreadsheets or paper.

4.4.8 Improved self-service for staff on reporting and analysis of data

4.4.9 We have also launched a contractor portal, which allows our external contractors to receive work orders electronically, eliminating the need for us to send over orders via e-mail.

4.4.10 The portal also allows contractors to send us their invoices, request variations and upload photos, we are also able to see real time updates on the status of works orders from our external contractors.

4.4.11 Any information put on the portal by our contractors automatically appears in our main system for staff to see in real time.

#### **4.5 Arun from Home, our new portal**

4.5.1 A new tenant and leasehold portal have been developed as part of this project and will provide our residents with more options to self-serve.

4.5.2 A group of residents have tested the portal for us and fed back on its features and ease of use, and this feedback is being used to develop training videos for our residents.

4.5.3 A soft launch of the portal was carried out at the beginning of September where we invited 100 residents to sign up for the portal and provide us feedback. If the soft launch is successful a full roll out will take place in the Autumn. A verbal update on the soft launch will be provided at committee.

4.5.4 Some of the initial functions on the portal will be viewing rent accounts, raising repairs and raising enquiries. The portal will also enable us to send out key messaging to our residents, such as news updates. The portal also meets current accessibility requirements.

4.5.5 Further functionality will be developed in consultation with our residents once we have launched the portal.

#### **4.6 Future development**

4.6.1 We will be continuing development of CX Housing, which will include mapping more of our daily processes into the system via cases and tasks.

4.6.2 We use business process mapping to capture our as-is process, and then our to-be looking at how we can use the system to make our processes more efficient and to deliver improved customer experiences.

4.6.3 We continue to develop new reporting in the system, to allow further monitoring of our performance, and to allow us to report on the wider range of new functionality.

4.6.4 We are also exploring the use of Civica CX with other departments across the council, and whether the functionality could be beneficial to their teams. For example, our community safety and anti-social behaviour team benefiting from the case management functionality.

#### 4.7 **Property, estates and facilities team**

4.7.1 Our property and estates team are also using Civica CX Housing and have configured the system to manage and raise works orders on corporate assets.

4.7.2 The system is providing better visibility of corporate assets, and improved monitoring of works carried out to these assets.

4.7.3 Property and estates will also be working with us on Phase 2 of the project.

#### 4.8 **Abritas, choice-based lettings**

4.8.1 Another part of Civica's software is Abritas which is a system for choice-based lettings and homelessness.

4.8.2 Phase 1 of the Abritas implementation was for choice-based lettings, and the launch of Arun Homefinder which is our new housing register portal.

4.8.3 This portal replaces I-housing for housing register applications and bidding.

4.8.4 Staff from our housing options team worked closely with Civica throughout Phase 1 to develop and test the system. This team worked extremely hard to ensure delivery of a new housing register portal that met our requirements and delivered for our customers.

4.8.5 At the same time as the launch of Arun Homefinder our revised allocations policy went live, and we wrote out to all customers on the current housing register and asked them to re-register on the new portal.

4.8.6 Carrying out a re-registration process is best practice across local authorities as it enables us to assess who still requires assistance with housing. Our normal re-registration process was put on hold whilst we developed our new system as we wanted to launch the new portal alongside the revised allocations policy. This allowed the housing options team to assess these applications against the new allocations policy.

4.8.7 During the period of re-registration, we closed our bidding cycle for 8 weeks to allow customers to put in their new application and become active users on the new portal. No applicants were disadvantaged during this period as we continued to direct-let properties.

4.8.8 Our first bidding cycle via Arun Homefinder was on the 19 August 2024 where we advertised 28 properties.

## 4.9 **Benefits**

- 4.9.1 The Arun Homefinder portal will be simpler for our customers to use and provide better visibility of their status on the housing register, as they will be able to see what position they came in when placing bids on properties, this is new function that was not available before.
- 4.9.2 There will also be more detailed information available to customers on the dedicated Arun Homefinder portal, which also provides a latest news section. The portal will provide more opportunities for customers to self-serve.
- 4.9.3 The portal will also be easier for our staff assessing applications, as all information will be provided and assessed through Abris, making sure that the right people are allocated the right homes.

## 4.10 **Phase 2**

- 4.10.1 Work has now commenced on Phase 2 of the project which includes the following modules.
  - a) Asset management
  - b) Planned maintenance
  - c) Compliance
  - d) Service charges
  - e) Information management
  - f) Abris homelessness
- 4.10.2 Phase 2 will go live during the Summer of 2025.
- 4.10.3 We have already attended the first set of scoping workshops which allow us to make design decisions on the modules above.
- 4.10.4 Our external project manager and technical resource continue to support us through phase 2 and help to ensure the project stays on track and delivers against our requirements.
- 4.10.5 Progress with the project is monitored via various mechanisms such as project team meetings, and weekly checkpoint meetings with our Civica project manager.
- 4.10.6 A risks, assumptions, issues and dependencies (RAID) log is kept up to date, and allows us to collect, monitor and track project information.
- 4.10.7 We have a project board made up of our project sponsor, Richard Tomkinson and senior managers across housing and IT.
- 4.10.8 The delivery of Phase 2 will provide further functionality for our staff, and allow our compliance, asset and planned data to all be in one fully integrated system.

## **5 CONSULTATION**

5.1 None required

## **6 OPTIONS/ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERS**

6.1 This report is for noting only

## **7 COMMENTS BY THE GROUP HEAD OF FINANCE/SECTION 151 OFFICER**

7.1 Spend forecasts are as per budget with savings being delivered for HRA annually estimated at £49,000 as Mobyssoft licensing is not required.

## **8 RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS**

8.1 The housing management system project is on the council's operational risk register, which provides appropriate oversight of any current risks and the mitigations in place.

## **9 COMMENTS OF THE GROUP HEAD OF LAW AND GOVERNANCE & MONITORING OFFICER**

9.1 This report is for noting and there are no specific legal and governance implications

## **10 HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT**

10.1 Project team staff are seconded onto this project from their substantive posts, with other staff backfilling their roles.

## **11 HEALTH & SAFETY IMPACT**

11.1 The delivery of Phase 2 contains modules related to Asset management, planned maintenance and compliance. All functions that ensure the councils stock meets any statutory and legislative requirements relating to health and safety. Having this data in an integrated system will allow for better oversight of these functions, improving visibility of the status of each property.

## **12 PROPERTY & ESTATES IMPACT**

12.1 Property and estates also went live with Phase 1 of Civica CX Housing in June 2024, the system has delivered improved functionality for the team, and the ability to have better oversight of corporate assets.

## **13 EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA) / SOCIAL VALUE**

13.1 Not required.



**14 CLIMATE CHANGE & ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT/SOCIAL VALUE**

14.1 No impact identified

**15 CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPACT**

15.1 No impact identified.

**16 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPACT**

16.1 There are no implications identified.

**17 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION / DATA PROTECTION CONSIDERATIONS**

17.1 Phase 2 will provide improved functionality for us to apply our data retention policies.

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**BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:**

[Model report with explanatory text - August 2008 \(arun.gov.uk\)](#)