



**CITY OF HAMILTON**  
**COMMUNITY AND EMERGENCY SERVICES DEPARTMENT**  
**Housing Services Division**

<b>TO:</b>	Chair and Members Emergency & Community Services Committee
<b>COMMITTEE DATE:</b>	June 22, 2015
<b>SUBJECT/REPORT NO:</b>	Co-ordinated Access System for Social Housing (CES14052(a)) (City Wide)
<b>WARD(S) AFFECTED:</b>	City Wide
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<b>SUBMITTED BY:</b>	Joe-Anne Priel General Manager Community and Emergency Services Department
<b>SIGNATURE:</b>	

**RECOMMENDATION**

- (a) That Council approve in principle the transfer of the Access to Housing (ATH) social housing waitlist service from a third-party delivery agent to direct service delivery by Housing Services Division effective April 1, 2016;
- (b) That Housing Services Division staff be directed to report back to Emergency and Community Services Committee in October 2015 with a detailed implementation plan including costs for such a transition for Council's consideration; and,
- (c) That Procurement Policy 11 be approved for a single source contract with Del Management Solutions Inc. (DMS) for the administration of the centralized waitlist for social housing applicants in the annual amount of \$335,198, effective to March 31, 2016 to be charged to Dept. ID and account 625010-571010.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The City of Hamilton, as Service Manager for social housing, is responsible for meeting provincial requirements under the *Housing Services Act, 2011* (HSA) for the establishment and maintenance of a service to manage the application and the wait list process for social housing. In Hamilton, the co-ordinated social housing wait list service is called Access to Housing (ATH). ATH serves as a central point for the application and initial eligibility screening for the City's 14,600 social housing units operated by Hamilton's 43 social housing providers. The City currently funds the ATH service through a third party agreement with Del Management Solutions Inc. (DMS) at an annual cost of \$335,198.

Housing Services Division staff led a work team comprised of ATH staff, social housing providers and tenant advocates to assess the effectiveness of the current ATH service and to explore a more responsive service for social housing applicants. It was determined that while ATH has continued to meet the original mandate of administering the waiting list according to legislated requirements, the service is not adequately equipped to meet the varying needs of the individuals and families on the waiting list. The ATH waitlist service should be enhanced to offer a more person-centred approach to support people while they wait for social housing.

On September 22, 2014, the Emergency and Community Services (E&CS) Committee received Report CES14052, describing an enhanced service approach for ATH to better meet the needs of applicants for social housing. The key change in the enhanced model is the introduction of a case management component to better support applicants and meet their needs not only related to housing but also regarding employment, income support and broader social supports.

A Request for Proposals (RFP) was issued August 26, 2014 to secure a qualified service provider to deliver the enhanced ATH Service. Three proponents submitted proposals. One proponent did not meet the minimum score in the evaluation criteria. After reviewing the two remaining proposals, it was decided that it would be in the best interest of the City and to ensure the best quality service to instead explore the possibility of delivering the service in-house where there is the opportunity to integrate existing services and infrastructure. Therefore, the City's Procurement Division issued a Notice of Cancellation to all of the proponents that submitted proposals for the RFP.

If Council approves the recommendation in principle to transfer the Access to Housing (ATH) social housing waitlist service from a third-party delivery agent to in-house service delivery, Housing Services Division staff will report back to E&CS Committee in October 2015 with a detailed implementation plan including the cost. If the recommendation is not approved, an RFP will be reissued for the enhanced ATH service.

This report seeks Council's approval for the single source contract with Del Management Solutions Inc. (DMS) for the extension of services to administer the ATH service until March 31, 2016. It is necessary to obtain the approval of Council for the extension of the Policy 11 as a single source as the monetary value of the contract exceeds \$250,000 as per Policy 11, Section 4.11 of the City's Procurement Policy.

DMS has agreed to maintain the service under the existing terms and conditions of their current contract. The agency is aware that the City is researching the possibility of bringing the service in-house and has committed to making the transition as smooth as possible.

***Alternatives for Consideration – Not Applicable***

## **FINANCIAL – STAFFING – LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

### **Financial:**

There are no financial implications to Report CES14052(a).

### **Staffing:**

There are no staffing implications to Report CES14052(a).

### **Legal:**

Legal Services will review and draft the contract with Del Management Solutions Inc. to extend their services until March 31, 2016.

## **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

### **Background**

The legal mechanism developed by the Province of Ontario to transfer all responsibility for social housing to Ontario municipalities was the Social Housing Reform Act 2000 (SHRA). Included in the responsibility was the administration of the co-ordinated access wait list. The co-ordinated access wait list is a local system of referring applicants seeking subsidized housing to social housing providers. Access to Housing (ATH) was adopted as the working name for the co-ordinated access system for the City of Hamilton.

In April 2004, an external consultant was contracted by the City of Hamilton to determine the most appropriate approach to deliver the co-ordinated access system for social housing. At the time, the coordinated access service was operated by a third-party, Community Housing Access Network (CHAN). It was recommended by the consultant and supported by community stakeholders that the coordinated access system be operated by a third party. Therefore, City Council directed staff (Report HCS04029) to proceed with a Request for Proposal (RFP). In September 2004, Fengate Property Management Ltd. was awarded Contract C2-15-04 effective January 1, 2005 (Report HCS04059).

As per the City of Hamilton's Purchasing Policy, in 2007 and, every three years thereafter, the City of Hamilton issued another RFP for the delivery of the Coordinated Access System for Social Housing. Fengate was the successful proponent in all subsequent RFP's. Fengate sold their business to DMS and the contract was executed under the new name of Del Management Solutions Inc. (DMS) on November 7, 2011.

When the centralized waiting list was first established after the download of social housing, the primary purpose was to meet legislated requirements for the City to maintain a waiting list for rent-geared-to-income (RGI) subsidies. However, over time, the context in which the waiting list operates has changed and expectations about the role of the waiting list within the housing access system have evolved to include a case management component.

In January 2012, the SHRA was replaced by the *Housing Services Act 2011* (HSA). Operation of a centralized system for selecting households for RGI social housing remains a mandatory requirement under the provincial legislation. The HSA also provided service managers with the opportunity to modernize how they manage the waiting list for social housing, including new policies and systems to improve customer service and applicants' ability to make informed housing choices. The change in legislation and the City of Hamilton's 10 year Housing and Homelessness Action Plan (Report CS11017(c)) led to a review of the ATH Service.

### **Review and Enhancement of the Social Housing Waitlist Service**

To assess and make recommendations about the ATH Service, a committee of City staff and housing stakeholders was convened in September 2012 for 18 months. Part of the assessment process included suggestions for the development of an enhanced model for services. It was determined that the waitlist service should be enhanced to offer a more person-centred service to support individuals and families while they wait for a social housing unit. The Action Plan consultations and the stakeholder committee consultations recommended implementing an enhanced ATH model that will include housing case management services as well as the administration of applications for social housing.

To fulfil the recommendations, the enhanced model maintains three key elements which are legislated for co-ordinated access centralized wait lists under the HSA. Four other non-mandatory value-added elements were identified by stakeholders as being important and will be introduced through the Enhanced Model. In the list below, the first three elements are the legislated items and the next four are the main value-added services. These enhancements will be accomplished primarily through the introduction of housing case management.

1. common application and supplementary forms;
2. maintenance of the centralized social housing waiting list;
3. standard eligibility criteria with established priority areas;
4. ensure individuals have accurate information to make informed choices about their housing options;
5. referrals to community resources;
6. supports to help people obtain and maintain housing; and,
7. work closely with over housed tenants.

On September 22, 2014 Emergency and Community Services (E&CS) Committee received Report CES14052 describing an enhanced service approach for ATH to better meet the needs of applicants for social housing.

### **Request of Information and Request for Proposals**

Since ATH has traditionally been operated through a third-party agreement, a Request for Information was developed to see if there were any organizations with the interest and ability to deliver the ATH co-ordinated access system.

Two Requests for Information (RFI)'s were issued in 2013 to explore alternate delivery models and community interest in delivering the co-ordinated waitlist service. The first RFI was issued February 2013. There were two submissions from out-of-town organizations. Local agencies advised that they missed the posting. Therefore, another RFI was issued on May 1, 2013 which resulted in four submissions. Based on the level of responses from the second RFI, the Housing Services Division staff decided to proceed with a Request for Proposals.

At the February 10, 2014 E&CS Committee meeting, a recommendation was approved to extend a single source contract with DMS for up to one year while the RFP process was undertaken. It was anticipated that the RFP process would be completed and a contract in place with the successful proponent by the end of the third quarter 2014.

On August 26, 2014, the RFP was issued to solicit proposals to secure a qualified service provider to deliver the enhanced ATH Service. The RFP closed October 8, 2014. Three proponents submitted proposals which were reviewed and scored based on criteria set out in the RFP.

One proponent did not meet the minimum score in the evaluation criteria. After reviewing the two remaining proposals, it was decided that it would be in the best interest of the City to instead explore the possibility of delivering the service in-house where there is the opportunity to integrate existing services and infrastructure. Therefore, the City's Procurement Division issued a Notice of Cancellation to all of the proponents that submitted proposals for the RFP.

### **POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND LEGISLATED REQUIREMENTS**

There are no policy implications for Report CES14052(a).

### **RELEVANT CONSULTATION**

To support the shift towards an enhanced co-ordinated access system, Housing Services Division staff consulted with a working group comprised of social housing providers, tenant advocates and community agency representatives. Work of the committee included:

- Consultation about whether the City should continue to use a third-party service delivery for co-ordinated access system for social housing;
- Environmental scan of other municipal centralized waiting list models;

- Suggestions for service improvements for all users of the system; and,
- Guidance on the development of the enhanced co-ordinated access centralized waiting list model with a person-centred focus.

In addition to recommendations about how to improve ATH services, housing stakeholders were consulted about the delivery approach. They were asked whether the ATH service should remain out-sourced or if it should be brought in-house to be delivered by the City of Hamilton. There was strong support from the community consultation to bring the service in-house.

An environmental scan revealed that the only other municipalities who have a coordinated access system for social housing administered by a third-party are Ottawa and Toronto. All other municipalities in Ontario have the coordinated access system, including the social housing waiting list, operated by the Local Housing Authority or the Service Manager. Bringing ATH services in-house aligns with the way most municipalities operate local centralized waiting list and the coordinated access systems.

City of Hamilton Legal Services and Corporate Procurement Divisions were consulted throughout this process and they do not have concerns with the recommendation contained in this report.

## **ANALYSIS AND RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION**

### **Benefits of Integrated Service Delivery**

A joint location and service for ATH and Housing Services Division would support a more coordinated and integrated housing service system for individuals and families who are applying for social housing and who are on the waitlist. It would provide a more seamless service system, greater accountability and less chance for people who are waiting for social housing to “fall through the cracks”.

There is an opportunity to increase the efficiency of the administration of the ATH services by incorporating it within the existing Housing Services Division staff complement where there is direct access to the Program Manager of Social Housing, policy analyst, receptionist, absence coverage and other resources such as Housing Allowances and Ontario Works.

The ATH Service would be moved to the same location as the Housing Services Division which is located at First Place in the central downtown area. It is an accessible location and office, on main bus-routes, across the street from the Ontario Works Main Office and close to other offices such as the Housing Help Centre and Legal Aid. An office expansion will benefit CityHousing Hamilton who is the current landlord as the expanded office space will occupy under-utilized commercial space.

Housing Services Division is working towards establishing referral systems to improve resource sharing and provide integrated services for applicants such as rent supplement, emergency shelter system, Residential Care Facilities (RCF), Ontario Works, and social workers. This is of particular interest given the implementation of a Housing First approach to address homelessness. Integrating the ATH Service with Housing Services Division will provide greater oversight and ability to respond more quickly to program changes, applicant needs and inquiries. This type of service delivery encourages an integrated view that places positive outcomes at the centre of the process for the people who are being served.

Having the ATH services delivered in-house by the Housing Services Division staff will ease the roll-out of the forthcoming new database technology through the Housing Collaborative Initiative (Report CS13033). The new database replaces the existing Lotus1-2-3 system with a single user-friendly, web-hosted Social Housing Information management system that will meet the governance, administrative, and financial needs of the Service Managers for social housing. This means the centralized waitlist information will be hosted in the same place as the social housing system administration information.

### **Budget Comparisons**

On October 8, 2014, the RFP closed and three submissions were received from Del Management Solutions Inc. (DMS), Housing Help Centre and Wesley Urban Ministries Inc. The RFPs were evaluated by a seven person team comprised of City staff, a community volunteer and a representative from the Niagara Region. Following the procurement protocol, results were posted on *biddingo* which is the government contract website used by the City of Hamilton on December 3, 2014.

An estimated annual budget for Housing Services Division to deliver the enhanced ATH model is \$399,869. Although higher than the lowest bidder, bringing the ATH service in-house has the benefit of Housing Services Division's staff and service infrastructure to maximize the quality of service. It is recommended that the most viable option is to bring the ATH service in-house under the Housing Services Division.

### **Next Steps**

DMS, the current vendor, has a contract that expires November 30, 2015. If the City does bring the ATH service in-house under the Housing Services Division, staff will work with DMS to maintain service levels and make the transition as smooth as possible. DMS is aware that the City plans to eventually bring ATH services in-house. It is anticipated that DMS would work collaboratively throughout a transition of services to the City.

Housing Services Division has engaged staff from the City's Facilities Division, the Real Estate Division, Human Resources and CityHousing Hamilton to scope out the necessary steps and costs associated with transitioning the ATH Service to Housing

Services Division. It was determined that an implementation plan with associated costs will be completed by October 2015. If the implementation plan is approved, it will take up to five months to April 1, 2016 to complete construction and the hiring process.

## **ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION**

None

## **ALIGNMENT TO THE 2012 – 2015 STRATEGIC PLAN**

### **Strategic Priority #2**

Valued & Sustainable Services

WE deliver high quality services that meet citizen needs and expectations, in a cost effective and responsible manner.

### **Strategic Objective**

2.3 Enhance customer service satisfaction.

### **Strategic Priority #3**

Leadership & Governance

WE work together to ensure we are a government that is respectful towards each other and that the community has confidence and trust in.

### **Strategic Objective**

3.4 Enhance opportunities for administrative and operational efficiencies.

## **APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED**

None