



CITY OF HAMILTON
COMMUNITY AND EMERGENCY SERVICES DEPARTMENT
Housing Services Division

TO:	Chair and Members Emergency & Community Services Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	February 6, 2017
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Co-ordinated Access System for Social Housing (CES14052(c)) (City Wide)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
PREPARED BY:	Tammy Morasse 905-546-2424 ext. 3727 Adam Sweedland 905-546-2424 ext. 1782
SUBMITTED BY:	Julie Western Set Director, Housing Services Division Community and Emergency Services Department
SIGNATURE:	

RECOMMENDATION

- (a) That Procurement Policy 11 be approved for a single source contract with Del Management Solutions Inc. (DMS) for the administration of the centralized wait list for social housing applicants in the annual amount of \$358,280, effective to March 31, 2018 to be charged to Dept. ID and account 624200-57010.
- (b) That the City of Hamilton enter into an Agreement amending the terms of the current Agreement between the City of Hamilton and DMS for the continued operation of Access to Housing from April 1, 2017 to March 31, 2018; and,
- (c) That the General Manager of Community and Emergency Services be authorized and directed to execute the Amending Agreement referred to in recommendation (b), in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On June 24, 2015, Council approved Report CES14042(a), which approved, in principle, bringing the Access-to-Housing (ATH) co-ordinated wait list system in-house, subject to the following direction:

“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.”

Staff were not able to report back in October 2015 because information required to develop a detailed implementation plan which considered the various elements of the

service was not fully available until mid-2016. Housing Services Division staff have now established a three-phased approach to implementing an enhanced system designed to better align peoples' housing needs with a broader range of housing options and individualized supports. An overview of the phases is attached as Appendix A to Report CES14052(c). The phases will move the ATH from being just an administrative wait list to include a system of enhanced individualized assessment and service integration for housing options and supports that better serve the needs of individuals. The three phases are:

Phase I "Accessing the System: Getting it Right" (commenced Q4 2016):

- Review and update local policies – in progress;
- Complete business process mapping for current service – in progress;
- Review and update all applications, forms and letters – in progress;
- Review current data collection and assess quality for future application – in progress;
- Integrate other existing housing options and supports (e.g. housing allowances) – beginning in February, 2017;
- Develop and test initial Assessment and Service Integration components (Front End Assessments and Move-in Readiness) – beginning in April, 2017.
- Finalize location and costing – Q1/Q2 2017
- Develop and implement communications strategy – beginning in Q3 2017;
- Complete office set up and necessary fit-ups – Q4 2017;
- Develop comprehensive building inventory with neighbourhood, building and the homes' amenities – Q4 2017;
- Complete staff recruitment and training – Q4 2017/Q1 2018;
- Complete development of new software, initial data migration and system testing to ensure uninterrupted service – Q4 2017/Q1 2018; and
- Activate in-house system effective April 1, 2018.

Phase II "Enhancing the System: Focused on Success" (commencing Q2 2018):

- Streamline application process through online applications and review other options for delivering service (e.g. community hubs) – Q2 2018;
- Integrate information with corporate call handling initiative – Q2 2018.
- Fully implement Front End Assessment and Move-in Readiness components – Q2 2018;
- Conduct education workshops with applicants, housing providers and other community service providers – Q3 2018;
- Continue evidence based Assessment and Service Integration program planning and development – Q4 2018;
- Develop annual report card for Council and Community – Q4 2018;
- Complete client satisfaction and system improvement surveys – Q1 2019; and

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- Facilitate and improve integration of non-housing related supports that contribute to long-term housing stability, such as connection to employment supports, child care and home management services – Q1 2019.

Phase III: “Responsive and Integrated System: Continuous Improvement” (commencing Q2 2019)

- Assess staffing needs and skills to ensure staffing effectively supports individuals accessing services;
- Review and improve data collection to better support housing and non-housing programming (e.g. establishing community hubs, social housing regeneration, private sector development of housing, recreational programming).

In 2017, Housing Services Division staff will focus on Phase I implementation and finalizing the planning for the potential physical transition of the ATH service. Two key components have caused further delay in finalizing an implementation plan: data and location.

Data

The current software system used for delivering the ATH has not been substantially updated in almost 15 years. As such, it was not designed to deliver detailed data and has limited capacity to extract the type of data that supports evidence-based decision making and continuous improvement.

Hamilton is participating in a joint effort with eight other municipalities to create an Integrated Housing Software (IHS) program to provide a comprehensive suite of applications specific to program delivery for social housing, including a housing access component (wait list management). IHS will be a significant improvement and staff will be able to extract good quality data to support evidence based program and policy decisions. Staff will also be better able to efficiently monitor housing providers to ensure compliance with the legislation and local policies relating to the selection of tenants.

Data migration to the new system needs to occur in a manner which preserves the data integrity and history and protects the identities of individuals. To facilitate this, further data clean-up, back-up and migration testing will be required. However, the development and implementation of IHS is not expected to be ready for data migration until Q4 2017.

Location

At this time, there is no location identified that meets the site requirements from which Housing Services can deliver the ATH service in a cost-effective manner. Staff initially reviewed vacant commercial space adjacent to the current Housing Services Division offices at First Place, owned by CityHousing Hamilton, (350 King Street East) which

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could be renovated to meet the site requirements. However, estimated capital costs required to renovate and “fit up” the space to meet the site requirements ranged from \$775K to \$1.2M, depending on the option reviewed. In addition, CityHousing Hamilton advised that an HVAC upgrade would be required for any of the options at an estimated additional cost of \$300K.

In order to transition this service to direct delivery with little to no levy impact, staff from Housing Services and Real Estate are currently reviewing other locations that could meet the site requirements in a much more cost-effective way. This primarily focuses on reviewing underutilized or available space within the City’s current real estate portfolio. It is not anticipated that a suitable location can be determined and properly outfitted before the expiry of the current service contract.

Report CES14052(c) recommends that Council approve the single source contract with Del Management Solutions Inc. (DMS) for the extension of services to administer the centralized wait list until March 31, 2018. It is necessary to obtain Council approval for the extension of the Policy 11 as a single source as the monetary value of the contract exceeds \$250,000.

DMS has agreed to maintain the service under the existing terms and conditions of their current contract and to work with the Housing Services Division staff during Phase I. DMS is aware that the City intends to bring 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 associated with Report CES14052(c) for 2017

Staffing: There are no staffing implications associated with Report CES14052(c) for 2017.

Legal: Legal Services will review and draft the contract with Del Management Solutions Inc. to extend their services until March 31, 2018.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The *Housing Services Act, 2011* (HSA), (and the preceding legislation the *Social Housing Reform Act, 2000* (SHRA)) mandates the responsibility for Service Managers to have a system for administering a wait list for social housing. The 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 wait list system for the City of Hamilton.

On September 22, 2014, the Emergency and Community Services Committee received Report CES14052 describing a proposed enhanced service for the ATH system that could better meet the needs of applicants for social housing, which included:

- Ensuring individuals have accurate information to make informed decisions and choices regarding their housing options;
- Referrals to community resources;
- Revised and updated forms, letters and building inventory information;
- Upgraded technology with potential for submission of on-line applications;
- Increased supports to help people when they apply, during their time on the wait list and as they prepare to move into RGI subsidized housing; and,
- Supports to help people maintain housing.

On August 26, 2014, the RFP was issued to secure a qualified service provider to deliver the enhanced ATH Service. 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 determined that the City should instead explore the option of delivering the service in-house where there is the opportunity to better integrate existing services and infrastructure and the RFP was cancelled.

On June 24, 2015, Council approved Item 6 of the Emergency and Community Services Committee Report 15-006 which approved, in principle, the transfer of the ATH social housing wait list service, including enhancements, from a third party delivery agent to direct delivery by the Housing Services Division.

In March 2016, Council approved a one-year extension of DMS' contract until March 31, 2017 (CES14052(b)). An additional extension is necessary due to the complexity of planning for the potential transition from third-party to in-house service delivery and the substantial due diligence required to ensure that the core service continues in an uninterrupted manner that meets the City's legislated requirements.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND LEGISLATED REQUIREMENTS

The *Housing Services Act, 2011* requires the City of Hamilton, as Service Manager for social housing, to maintain and administer a coordinated system of access to social housing.

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RELEVANT CONSULTATION

Sector Working Group

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

Del Management Services Inc. (DMS)

Housing Services Division staff met numerous times with management and staff from DMS to discuss the logistics of transitioning the service to an in-house model. In addition, staff also used these opportunities to understand the activity based workload of current DMS staff, such as:

- Information on office visits (the number of clients served “in person” on a daily, monthly and yearly basis and the peak demand times);
- Volume of telephone inquiries;
- Number of new applications, file updates and annual renewals;
- Inquiries from Housing Providers; and,
- Other value-added services (such as referrals to other service providers or “advice” regarding building selections).

Public Works Department, Corporate Assets and Strategic Planning Division (Facilities Management and Capital Programs Section)

Staff from the Facilities Management and Capital Programs section were consulted on design requirements and helped to assess and determine the additional accommodations to bring the ATH service in-house.

ANALYSIS AND RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

The City of Hamilton, as Service Manager for social housing, is responsible for meeting provincial requirements under the Housing Services Act, 2011 (the “Act”) for managing the wait list process for social housing. Hamilton’s social housing wait list service is called Access-to-Housing (ATH). ATH is the access point for people needing subsidized social housing. Social housing providers are responsible for offering vacant rent-geared-to-income (RGI) housing to tenants selected from ATH in accordance with local policies and legislation.

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Three-phases were designed to implement service integration and enhancement and achieve to successfully plan for the effective transition of the legislated service to direct delivery. Many program improvements can be implemented with no financial or staffing impacts and are already in progress.

Phase I “Accessing the System: Getting it Right” (commenced Q4 2016):

- Review and update local policies – in progress;
- Complete business process mapping for current service – in progress;
- Review and update all applications, forms and letters – in progress;
- Review current data collection and assess quality for future application – in progress;
- Integrate other existing housing options and supports (e.g. housing allowances) – beginning in February, 2017;
- Development and testing of initial Phase II assessment and service integration components (Front End Assessments and Move-in Readiness) – beginning in April, 2017.
- Finalize location and costing – Q2 2017
- Develop and implement communications strategy – beginning in Q3 2017;
- Complete office set up and necessary fit-ups – Q4 2017;
- Develop comprehensive building inventory with neighbourhood, building and the homes’ amenities – Q4 2017;
- Complete staff recruitment and training – Q4 2017/Q1 2018;
- Initial data migration to new software and system testing to ensure uninterrupted service – Q4 2017/Q1 2018; and
- Activate in-house system effective April 1, 2018.

Phase II “Enhancing the System: Focused on Success” (commencing Q2 2018):

- Streamline application process through online applications and review potential additional options for accessing service (e.g. community hubs) – Q2 2018;
- Complete integration with corporate call handling initiative – Q2 2018.
- Fully implement Front End Assessment and Move-in Readiness components – Q2 2018;
- Conduct education workshops with applicants, housing providers and other community service providers – Q3 2018;
- Continue evidence based Assessment and Service Integration program planning and development – Q4 2018;
- Develop annual report card for Council and Community – Q4 2018;

- Complete client satisfaction and system improvement surveys – Q1 2019; and
- Facilitate and improve integration of non-housing related supports that contribute to long-term housing stability, such as connection to employment supports, child care and home management services – Q1 2019.

Phase III: “Responsive and Integrated System: Continuous Improvement” (commencing Q2 2019)

- Assess staffing needs and skills to ensure staffing effectively supports individuals accessing services;
- Review and improve data collection to better support housing and non-housing programming (e.g. establishing community hubs, social housing regeneration, private sector development of housing, recreational programming).

The phased approach to the transition is considered within the context of five transition components: programming, staffing, communications, data and location. An overview of each phase and the transition components is attached to Report CES14052(c) as Appendix A.

Staff were not able to report back to the Emergency and Community Services Committee in October, 2015 as the information was not fully available for consideration until mid-2016. A review of the information has created a further delay in completing the detailed implementation planning for the potential physical integration of the ATH service into the Housing Services Division. Specifically, more time is needed because of two key transition components: data (software platform) and location.

Data

The current system at ATH uses a Lotus Notes platform. Lotus Notes is an old system which was originally launched in 1989. As legislation changed and as applications have become more complex, the Lotus Notes database has not evolved to fully address these changes. A modern system is critical to delivering future wait list services.

Hamilton is part of a joint effort with eight other municipalities to create the Integrated Housing Software (IHS) that will provide a comprehensive suite of applications specific to social housing, including a housing access (wait list management) component (CS13033). By better integrating the wait list management with the other aspects of social housing program delivery, data collection possibilities is significantly broadened and staff will be able to extract good quality data to support evidence based program and policy decisions. Program staff will also be better able to efficiently monitor housing providers to ensure compliance with the legislation and local policies relating to the selection of tenants.

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The new IHS computer system is critical for the success of the direct delivery of the wait list system. Several modules of the IHS software system are nearly complete. However, three of the most critical and complex modules are still under development, including the wait list and rent supplement modules. Software development is on-going with system testing expected in mid-2017. This project has the support of Ministry of Housing and it is expected to be widely adopted by most of the 47 Service Managers in Ontario.

The Lotus Notes database must be properly prepared for data migration to ensure the ATH legacy content is preserved and to properly protect the integrity of personal information of current and past applicants during the data transfer process. Staff will perform a pre-migration data review, assessment and testing. Completing data clean-up will reduce the risk of migrating data from Lotus Notes to the new IHS computer system. Data migration is already an element of the IHS project, and will include input from staff in the Information Technology Services Division (Corporate Services Department). However, IHS is not expected to be ready for data migration until Q4 2017.

Location

During the development of the enhanced service delivery model for the social housing wait list, several site requirements were identified, including:

- Fully accessible multi-function front service counter with public waiting area and room for public resources (literature, phone, computer) to accommodate annual walk-in traffic of approximately 16K visitors;
- Private interview rooms;
- Available transit (B-line) and parking;
- Staff and Manager work stations that support job requirements;
- Accessible washrooms for public and staff;
- Secure file storage area;
- Printer/fax/mail area;
- Emergency system- lighting and signage; and,
- Video surveillance and panic buttons where needed.

The original preferred site was vacant commercial space adjacent to the current Housing Services Division offices at First Place (350 King Street East), which is owned by CityHousing Hamilton. Housing Services Division staff worked with staff from the Facilities Management and Capital Programs section (Public Works Department, Corporate Assets and Strategic Planning Division) and the Real Estate section (Planning & Economic Development Department, Economic Development Division) to complete a detailed assessment of the capital costs associated with the preferred space.

The City retained an architect to review the space and provide detailed plans with capital cost estimates for three options within the vacant space. The estimated capital costs required to renovate and “fit up” the space to meet the site requirements ranged from \$775K to \$1.2M, depending on the option reviewed. In addition, CityHousing Hamilton advised that an HVAC upgrade would be required for any of the options at an estimated additional cost of \$300K.

In order to transition this service to direct delivery with little to no levy impact, staff from Housing Services and Real Estate are currently reviewing other locations that could meet the site requirements in a much more cost-effective way. This includes reviewing underutilized or vacant space within the City’s current real estate portfolio.

Next Steps

There is currently no location determined that can be properly readied in time to efficiently and successfully implement the physical delivery of the ATH service before the expiration of the existing contract with DMS, the current vendor, on March 31, 2017. Housing Services Division staff are recommending an extension of the existing contract for up to one year, until March 31, 2018. DMS is aware that the City is planning the direct delivery of ATH services and they are willing to maintain the current service and work collaboratively throughout any transition of services to the City.

In advance of requesting approval for this contract extension, Housing Services Division staff conducted an on-site operational review of ATH. The purpose was to ensure that DMS is administering the service in accordance with the agreement and fulfilling the legislative obligations established in the Housing Services Act, 2011 and the City’s local policies. Based on the findings of the operational review, staff is of the opinion that DMS is meeting its contractual obligations at this time.

Housing Services Division will continue to work staff from the City’s Facilities Management Section, Real Estate Division and Human Resources to scope out the necessary steps and costs associated with completing the transition of the ATH Service to Housing Services Division. Once an appropriate location is confirmed, Housing Service Division will work with Facilities Management to finalize the site requirements and costs and report back to the Emergency and Community Services Committee. Based on initial estimates, it will take up to five months to complete transfer process from DMS to Housing Services Division.

If the current agreement is not extended, the City will be responsible for operating the social housing Access to Housing effective April 1, 2017. There is not adequate time to ensure a smooth transition of this service from DMS to the City. Spatial and technical considerations need to be addressed in order to ensure consistent and predictable service is not jeopardized.

ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION

None

ALIGNMENT TO THE 2016 – 2025 STRATEGIC PLAN

Community Engagement & Participation

Hamilton has an open, transparent and accessible approach to City government that engages with and empowers all citizens to be involved in their community.

Our People and Performance

Hamiltonians have a high level of trust and confidence in their City government.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

Appendix A to Report CES14052(c): Overview of phased approach to ATH Integration and Implementation