

**ANGUS COUNCIL**

**Housing Committee - 21 April 2005  
Resources and Central Services Committee -3 May 2005**

**COMMON HOUSING REGISTER - IT SOLUTION**

**REPORT by DIRECTOR OF HOUSING**

**ABSTRACT**

This report provides information on an IT solution for the establishment of a Common Housing Register (CHR) and also proposes the most suitable provider to implement it.

**1. RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended to Members that:

- (i) The estimated cost up to £36,000 (excluding VAT) relating to the acquisition, installation and implementation of suitable software to establish a Common Housing Register (excluding e-services) be met from the Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme, which will require to be adjusted accordingly.
- (ii) Authorise the Director of Housing to enter into negotiations with SX3, the current supplier of Housing software to Angus Council, to provide a Common Housing Register solution for Angus.

**2. BACKGROUND**

As members are aware a successful bid was made to establish an Angus Common Housing Register (per report 430/04). The establishment of the Register will improve and simplify application and access to a range of social rented housing in Angus, as applicants will only be required to complete one common application form, rather than completing an application form for each housing provider.

A need has been identified to obtain suitable software, which will allow the Common Housing Register (CHR) partners to access a common database to share information. This software will also allow partners to allocate houses according to their own policies. In principle, Angus Housing Association and Hillcrest are the two RSLs preparing to participate in the CHR and that given the relatively small size of other RSLs it is unlikely that they would be participating in the implementation of the CHR at the present moment.

**3. GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF THE ANGUS COMMON HOUSING REGISTER**

- The members of the Angus CHR will use a single application form on which anyone over 16 years old wishing to be housed in the Angus area can register.

- The content of the application would be stored in a database, which can be used by all CHR partners to allocate a house to the most suitable person according to their own allocation policy.

#### **4. CURRENT OPERATIONAL SYSTEM USED BY THE HOUSING DEPARTMENT AND PROPOSED SOLUTION**

The current integrated housing management system is provided by SX3 and at present a migration program to I-World is being implemented. The software provided by SX3 includes an allocation module that allows for the effective processing of applications for council housing and the appropriate allocations to be made.

The Development Officer (Common Housing Register), who was appointed following the successful bid in last May, was tasked with identifying an appropriate Common Housing Register solution for Angus. Solutions from three IT providers, SX3, Scout Solutions and Dynamo Computer, were evaluated and the outcome showed that in terms of cost, reliability and experience, SX3 would be the best to implement the Angus Common Housing Register.

The main advantage of selecting SX3 is that unlike the other two suppliers, a new system will not have to be built due to SX3 already being the current supplier of the department's integrated housing management system. Therefore, the Common Housing Register solution proposed by SX3 can effectively be seen as a logical extension to the existing operational system for the maintenance of the waiting list and the allocation of housing.

SX3 fully supports Common Housing Registers. Within SX3 Allocations any number of re-housing lists may be defined and linked to either a single application form or different application forms. Lists may also link to individual allocation policies or to a common policy. Therefore applicants may be on multiple rehousing lists with different allocation policies applied as defined by individual organisations. Shortlists will reflect the different priorities defined within these allocation policies. There is no restriction on the number of lists or priorities that SX3 will support.

The system provides comprehensive security supporting third party access. This security means that access to the system by third parties such as Housing Associations can be restricted as appropriate. A Housing Association could, for example, be restricted to only updating and/or viewing applicants who only want to be considered for that Association's accommodation and only make offers on their properties. All users may be restricted in the screens and menus they have access to.

Based on 2-4 RSLs participating in the Angus Common Housing Register, SX3 have indicated that the estimated cost for implementing the Register is up to £36,000. The final cost will be determined by the complexity of the allocation policies of the participating RSLs. An indication of the estimated costs associated with the individual elements of project are as follows:-

Software Licence fee	£5,000
Allocation consultancy	£20,000
Project Management	£8,000
Annual Support	£1,250

## **5. COMMUNICATION AND LEGAL ISSUES**

In implementing an IT based Common Housing Register the partner Registered Social Landlords (currently Angus and Hillcrest) will need to have access to the SX3 housing system through the Angus Council's communications network. Consequently security and legal issues will require to be dealt with and these are currently being investigated by the Council's IT and Law and Administration departments.

Members may wish to note that Edinburgh Council uses SX3 for its Edindex Common Housing Register and more than 20 Common Housing Register partners have access to it, allowing the partners to shortlist candidates for their own properties.

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The Scottish Executive has provided initial funding of £60,000 over the period 2004/05 and 2005/06 financial years for the development and establishment of the Angus Common Housing Register but this funding has in the main been allocated to staffing costs, training and publicity.

An element of the budget, amounting to £10,000, was identified as a contribution towards IT facilities and it is proposed that the initial cost of communication links from participating partners to our network will be met by the Common Housing Register budget as the participating Associations have not received any funding from the Scottish Executive towards the establishment of the Register. The IT department is currently investigating the cost associated with permitting the Associations to access the SX3 system.

It will be appreciated that the development funding received from the Scottish Executive is insufficient to meet the estimated cost up to £36,000 relating to the acquisition, installation and implementation of suitable software to establish a Common Housing Register. Consequently it is therefore proposed that this cost should be met from the Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme, which will need to be adjusted accordingly.

The ongoing revenue cost of operating the register from April 2006 will be recharged back to the partner organisations and it is anticipated that this will be done on a stock basis. Discussions are ongoing with Hillcrest and Angus Housing Association regarding the annual running cost. As staff from within the Council's Housing Department will process all common housing application forms operational benefits will accrue to the partner Associations. A further report will be submitted to an appropriate meeting of the Housing Committee on the estimated running costs and the recharge to be made to each partner organisation.

## **7. HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS**

There are no direct human rights implications arising from this report

## **8. CONSULTATION**

In preparing this report there has been consultation with the Chief Executive, Director of Finance, Director of Law & Administration and Director of Information Technology.

## **9. CONCLUSION**

An appropriate IT solution will allow effective implementation of the Common Housing Register and it will bring operational benefits to all the partners, thus allowing them to share the running costs of the Common Housing Register.

The utilisation of software provided by SX3 will assist in delivering an effective and efficient Common Housing Register, due to being the current supplier of our housing system.

The housing department's staff are familiar with SX3 and so, would require little training to operate the Common Housing Register

It is anticipated that the security issues relating to allowing RSLs to access the Common Housing Register can be resolved thus providing a better service to citizens who wish to rent social housing.

Ron Ashton  
Director of Housing

Note: - The following background paper, as defined by Section 50d of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, (other than any containing confidential or exempt information), were relied upon to any material extent in preparing this report.

Report 430/04 - Outcome of Funding Bid - Common Housing Register