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Council

**Soft Market testing**

Housing – Rochdale Borough Council

1. **Background**

Rochdale Borough Council are seeking to improve their market knowledge of housing technology and platforms. We would like to take the opportunity to do some `soft market testing’ as outlined below, to determine current interest levels in the market.

We are especially keen to learn more about best practice and innovation in the sector from interested suppliers, and provide a meaningful opportunity to showcase your products and perhaps draw our attention to challenges or opportunities we may have overlooked. We are also interested in systems and approaches that provide some flexibility so we can improve our service delivery over time. Any system(s) will need to integrate statutory housing requirements alongside non-statutory functions, such as private rented sector and compulsory purchase case management systems.

The outputs will be used to inform our requirements and future specifications, so that they are based on what can realistically be delivered.

1. **Key Aims**

We would like to invite suppliers to respond to how they could meet some or all of the needs identified here. We would also like to give any interested suppliers the opportunity to demonstrate their approach to us.

We have a broad range of requirements. We are interested in systems that cover some or all of the aims outlined below, so don’t consider this an exhaustive checklist at this stage, more an outline of what we hope to achieve.

We have a range of outcomes we are aiming for across:

* Combined housing options (Housing Register casework, homelessness, prevention)
* Private Rented Sector (PRS) including enforcement, engagement, landlord services
* Empty Property work (including Empty Dwelling Management Orders and Compulsory Purchase Orders)
* Providing a holistic cross-team Personal Housing Plan, which can be utilised by officers for statutory and non-statutory functions. Such a PHP must be capable of being recorded and reported both from a statutory and non-statutory perspective.

Here is some more detail, expressed as user stories, or high-level features, and focussed on outcomes. As part of this exercise, we welcome supplier input and challenge on these.

### **Housing Options**

**As an Officer** we want to prevent homelessness and deal with a full range of housing issues, in order to:

* be fast and effective in addressing the needs of specific individuals, managing all aspects of their homelessness support and documentation online, from applications to appeals, online
* quickly search for and book temporary accommodation meeting specific criteria from a variety of sources
* Provide an options service which goes beyond traditional homelessness & allocations, and integrates with colleagues, services and housing products including but not limited to social housing.
* Have easier and closer collaboration with partner organisations; allowing them to access certain data and to participate in the creation and delivery of Personal Housing Plans.
* help identify issues and risks early so I can offer proactive support to vulnerable individuals
* provide fully reportable data, with easy-to-use compliance, for Government statistics including HCLIC and LAHS
* view/access top-layer information across other services, (for example to see if Social Care already have a file)

**As a customer** I need:

* To be provided with a range of housing solutions, to understand fully what may be available [or not] now and in the realistic future.
* To have a Personal Housing Plan which is understandable to me, legally compliant, goal oriented and works across all those Services I interact with.
* To have a Personal Housing Plan which is understandable to me if there is no statutory duty on the Council to assist, but who will provide tailored solutions outside of that legal framework.
* to only need to share my story once (for example providing integrated access for my housing officer to those systems in other internal services as necessary)
* to access self-help through digital channels, as appropriate for my levels of needs/digital skills
* to be able to access the system (through the system being in compliance with the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018)

### **Allocation – Housing Register**

**As a customer** I can:

* access an online application form (which is integrated into the system and avoids duplicate data being created)
* access a Choice-Based Letting system; and/or an alternative direct lets/matching system
* easily understand the offers available to me, including different PRS, affordable housing products (not just limited to the Social Housing Register)
* easily upload documents and modify details
* see a waiting time calculator to help me understand the timelines

**As an Officer** I can:

* access an effective reporting system, allowing me to easily understand and ask questions of the data in the system
* ensure there is banding pre-assessment for customers
* enable a smart waiting list, a parallel register, to run on same platform

### **PRS (Private Rented Sector) – Enforcement**

**As an Officer** I can:

* access a case management system which is quick and easy to use
* access relevant data from other internal services (for example Revs and Bens)

**As a Private Landlord** I can:

* access a ‘Private Landlord Forum’ – containing advice and discussion
* register for HMO (Housing in Multiple Occupation) and Selective licences / accreditation
* Make enquiries to the housing officer (linked to the case management system)
* be matched with a tenant through the system
* be on a Landlord Register for supported accommodation, showing tiers of funding (benefits)

### **Supply (Empty Properties/CPO/Supply)**

* Capturing developer’s portal - initial non-planning information on schemes
* Connecting empty properties to the homelessness team – use of the same property set to automatically match with home seekers, and/or tailored reporting for Officers to match
* Systems access to/integration with relevant Land Registry and Council tax data
* Case management system to capture and gather information and evidence to support any enforcement action required. The system would be key to the CPO programme, maintaining historic and legacy evidence and information, to ensure successful presentation to the Secretary of State.

### **Temporary Accommodation (Asset Management)**

* Compliancy recording system (gas/water/lifts/fire etc.) including asset information
* Conduct all key aspects of asset management online, including areas such as
  + maintenance schedules
  + inspections
  + managing antisocial behaviour
  + auditing
  + payments and other requests
  + sorting repairs and insurance
* Facilitate easier and closer collaboration with partner organisations.
* Help identify issues and risks early enabling proactive support to vulnerable individuals
* Rent accounting - Including a direct payment system, personal payment devices and rent card creation

### **DCF & Local Welfare**

* Aspiration to safely and appropriately share some information on existing homeless and allocations files with the third sector
* To allow customers direct access to other benefits and financial help, through digital and assisted digital
* Online personal assessment tool – benefits/singles tax reduction/financial tool

### **Gypsy & Traveller**

* Rent accounts
* R&M
* Housing management system
* Tenancy management, capture movers/leavers/personal contacts

**Project Timescales (indicative)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Stage of the project** | **Anticipated Timeline** |
| Soft market testing | 2nd June 2021 |
| Closing date for suppliers to have submitted documents | 23rd June 2021 |
| Presentations | Week Commencing 28th June 2021 |
| Procurement process begins | TBC |
| Contract Start Date | Feb 2022 |

1. **Soft Market Testing**

**THIS IS NOT A CALL FOR COMPETITION**

The Soft Market Test is intended to allow interested organisations with relevant experience to outline their views and provide information with no commitment to themselves or the Council.

The Council is looking to award a contract commencing April 2022. During the Soft Market Test we would like to gauge the level of interest and hear learn about pricing models and approaches to inform our approach.

**Stage 1 -** Interested suppliers are required to complete the following company information form and a short questionnaire (at appendix 1). Suppliers who complete and return the questionnaire ***may*** be invited to meet with Council representatives to discuss its requirements. We expect these sessions to happen in June 2021.

The questionnaire should be returned via The Chest - <https://www.the-chest.org.uk/> by 23rd June 2021

If Suppliers have any questions about this soft market test, such questions should be submitted to the Council using the ‘Question and Answer’ facility within the opportunity advertised on The Chest. A copy of the question and a copy of the written reply may be circulated to all Suppliers, with anonymity of the Supplier preserved. Suppliers must not raise questions through any other channels, including emails direct to the Council or to STAR Procurement. No questions will be responded to, other than those raised through The Chest as described above

**We encourage your participation in this soft market testing exercise, but must emphasise that your involvement in this exercise will not carry any commercial advantage in any ensuing procurement process.**

**No information provided in response to this soft market testing exercise will be used in any evaluation of any subsequent response to a procurement exercise.**

1. **General Information**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **3.1** | Full name of your organisation: |  |
| Contact Details Name: |  |
| Job Title: |  |
| Address: |  |
| Telephone no: |  |
| Fax No: |  |
| Mobile No: |  |
| Email Address: |  |
| Web Address (if any): |  |

1. **Undertaking from the supplier**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Name:\* |  |
| Signed: | Duly authorised on behalf of the Supplier  (Electronic signature required here) |
| Position: |  |
| Date: |  |

**Appendix 1 – Questionnaire**

**Please complete the following questionnaire fully, highlighting any information that you consider to be commercially sensitive\***

1. Would you be interested in bidding for this proposed Project?

If Yes, why?

If No, why not?

Response (max 500 words):

1. Please detail the experience your organisation has in delivering this type of service (max 1000 words)?
2. Please detail how you will meet the current and future requirements as detailed in the service specification? (Max 1000 words)
3. When/if the Council go to tender following the soft market test, is there anything in addition to the information in this brief that suppliers would need to be advised of in order to aid in their response. (max 500 words)
4. Please can you detail a brief statement to demonstrate what added value your organisation can offer in the market? (Max 500 words)
5. Please provide indicative costing for 30 – 50 users including the following:

Annual licence and any discount for years 1 – 5

Implementation costs (including importing data from legacy systems)

API costs

Integration Costs

If you are able to offer systems that meet 1 or more of the requirements which can be purchased separately please provide appropriate cost breakdown of the different modules.