

COMMUNITY & HOUSING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Wednesday 8 th March, 2023
Report Subject	Dynamic Resource Scheduler (DRS) - Update
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Housing & Regeneration
Report Author	Chief Officer (Housing and Communities)
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides an overview and update on the newly procured Dynamic Resource Scheduler (DRS), the changes made to the service during the testing stages of the pilot and the new measures implemented to improve our overall customer satisfaction rates with regards to the service we provide.

The procurement and investment of this software is seen as a catalyst for delivering a more customer focused housing repairs function. It is also anticipated that the newly procured software provides strong potential for payback. This can be realised through a more productive, efficient and effective housing repairs service, reduced customer call-backs and reduced travel times for our operatives.

The proposals within this report are fully aligned and complementary to the work presently being undertaken to improve the online offer from the housing service, to make it easier and simpler for customers to diagnose faults and report repairs and support the preference from customers for a convenient appointments service to complete outstanding works.

The software has been procured for a period of five years with an option to extend by a further two years (1+1) at the end of the five year contract term.

The report focuses on what has been delivered to date along with the next phases of the DRS pilot.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	Community Housing & Assets Overview and Scrutiny Committee to note the next phases of the DRS testing and pilot stages before the Council moves into a fully functional and fully live DRS environment
2	Community Housing & Assets Overview and Scrutiny Committee to support the Council in promoting the service offer, where our tenants can be provided with an appointment for repair and maintenance work requests, in line with our agreed target and attendance times

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	DYNAMIC RESOURCE SCHEDULER (DRS) SOFTWARE
1.01	<p>Overview</p> <p>Over recent years, many service providers and private housing providers have significantly transformed their approach to the delivery of frontline housing services, this is principally due to; advancements in mobile technology, the need to enhance how customers are dealt with as individuals and to mitigate additional cost pressures.</p> <p>The Council is implementing a customer centric 'digital first' approach which will provide a more focused and convenient way to access the services it provides.</p> <p>Through investing in technology solutions to transform the way services are delivered it is possible to improve customer focus, enhance productivity and improve efficiency whilst at the same time reducing costs.</p> <p>In procuring this software, the Council have remained focused in its aims and objectives of the digital strategy and shall provide for a step change in the quality of service provided to its customers.</p> <p>The Council currently provides responsive repairs services to circa 7,300 properties, responding to over 40,000 calls per annum to the Council's Customer Contact Centre and delivering over 30,000 responsive repairs annually along with additional follow-up works as a result of the initial repair request.</p> <p>The DRS system has a number of benefits for customers and our operatives, along with the Council, which can be summarised below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A faster repairs service enabling the service to significantly increase the number of jobs completed each day• An enhanced customer experience through an appointment service and enabling follow-up works to be scheduled and completed more easily• Supporting and enabling customer independence through linking into self-serve and 'self-appointing' of responsive repair requests

- Reduced traveling times for operatives
- Reduced operational costs



<p>Appointment at F.P.O.C. Slot time to suit me Short wait/fix time Operative on time First time fix Pro-active alert Emergencies accommodated Channel flexibility on-line?</p>		<p>Optimised working day Efficient slot Reduce no accesses Minimise travel time First time fix Lower administration costs Manage emergencies and problems Reduce call centre dependency</p>
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A key benefit of implementing a DRS system is the opportunity to shift the focus of the Repair Team Leaders from running complex query reports relating to performance, job logging errors and system errors, whilst moving away from allocating works directly to operatives (which takes up a significant amount of time) to focusing upon the quality of work, utilising performance reporting to improve the productivity and efficiency of the service, championing and improving customer care across the service. This will provide greater capacity for the Team Leaders to undertake a more proactive approach, focus on post-inspection of completed works and facilitate customer feedback to address areas of under-performance.

The introduction of a text messaging service, which will notify customers when a job has been ordered, provide a reminder to them the day before the job is to be completed, and send a text message immediately following the repair in order to ascertain the customer's feedback on works undertaken, will help to improve the customer experience and overall customer satisfaction of the service the Council provides.

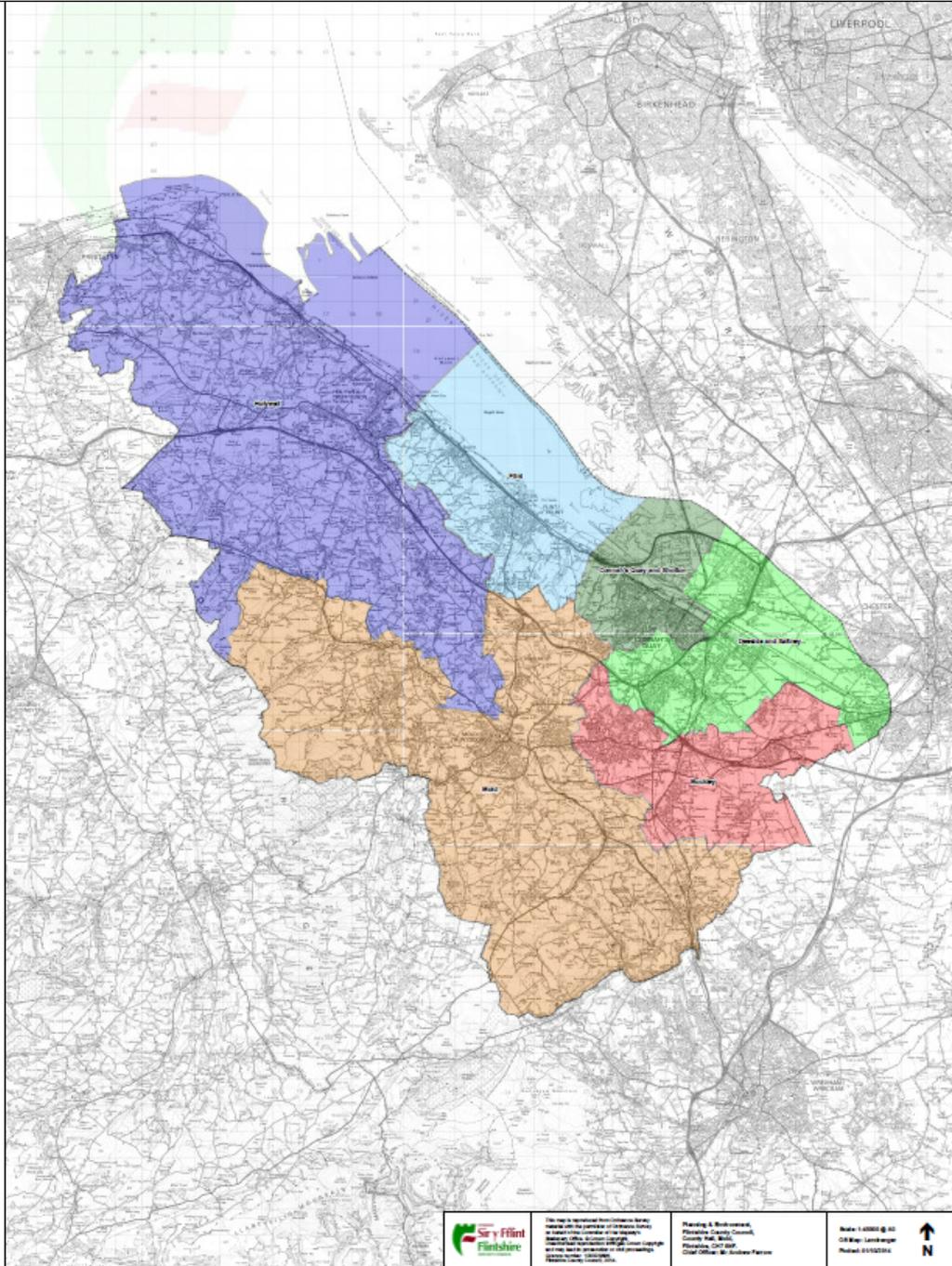
Performance improvement will be achieved through utilising the detailed analytics and performance reports provided by the software (the system can generate over 100 different reports relating to performance and planning activities). This provides the service with the ability to drill down into significant detail the performance of the repair team member and the jobs which are being generated.

Health and safety will be improved by raising awareness, undertaking spot checks and updating processes and practices. By spending more time out on site, checking works, ensuring that repair team members are wearing appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) and adhering to risk assessments, the supervisors shall ensure operatives are complying with safe systems of work.

	<p>Promoting digital inclusion shall be supported through encouraging and facilitating the use of online options to report a repair and arrange an appointment for the repair to be completed.</p>
1.02	<p>Planning Team and Customer Contact Centre</p> <p>A new planning team has been established within the Business Performance Service consisting of a Lead Job Planner and two Job Planners. The resourcing in the team was determined using historic data including the amount of repairs completed each year and number of operatives available through the scheduling system. The resource of the team will be reviewed following full implementation and analysis of intelligence provided by the system.</p> <p>It was critical to have the Lead Job Planner in post to work with the Call Centre Team Leader and responsive repairs team ahead of UAT (user acceptance testing) and delivery of the training programme to ensure the successful implementation and utilisation of the dynamic resource scheduling system.</p> <p>Vigorous testing and training to gain a clear understanding of the system has been undertaken and included a wider range of staff including the call centre team, planners, administration, system auditors, team leaders and operatives from the responsive repair team. The training and testing allowed a number of live scenarios to be tested before implementation. The system has been uploaded with the data required to ensure it has the required intelligence on the workforce, i.e. home addresses, skill sets, working patterns and Flintshire’s social housing stock. This allows the system to identify the most efficient geographical work areas and routes to enable the first and last job of the day to be scheduled as close to the operatives home address as possible.</p> <p>Currently the primary route for repairs reporting and logging is via telephone through the call centre and as such it is vital the lead job planner and call centre team leader meet regularly to identify any concerns in respect of business rules.</p> <p>The description of the job logged and S.O.R’s (schedule of rates used) defines the priority of the job, time, trade and materials required to complete. The scheduling system indicates the most efficient operative for allocation.</p> <p>The job planners can schedule and reschedule to different operatives throughout the day to ensure improved productivity of workforce and customer satisfaction.</p> <p>Training is due to commence early-February on the Infosuite system, the reporting element of DRS, which will allow further performance improvement through utilising the detailed analytics performance reports to be provided by the planning team.</p>

1.03	<p>The Assets Service overview - Repairs & Maintenance Dept.</p> <p>There are in the region of two hundred housing asset personnel comprising of highly multi-skilled trade operatives, caretakers, system officers, tenant liaison officers, inspectors, surveyors and managers.</p> <p>The Housing Assets Service is responsible for ensuring our Council homes and related assets are in good condition, free from disrepair and comply with the various standards, regulation and guidelines.</p> <p>The service is a multi-disciplined technical service for responsive repairs and planned maintenance works.</p> <p>The service is responsible for the delivery of the housing capital investment programme, housing responsive repairs and maintenance, empty property refurbishment, housing inspections, stock condition surveys, compliance, regeneration and estate caretaking services.</p> <p>The objective of the service is to continue to keep the Council’s housing stock and related assets in good, maintainable condition and state of repair by planning maintenance to those assets and components efficiently and effectively based upon robust stock condition surveys which identify need, priority, efficiency and cost, offering a more customer focused approach to delivery.</p> <p>To schedule and coordinate our repairs service in an efficient manner and to further develop our specific policies and strategies such as our tenancy agreements, communication strategies, compliance policies along with our home energy conservation and fuel poverty strategies designed to conserve energy usage for our tenant’s homes.</p> <p>The implementation of the DRS system will assist the service in delivering its aims and objectives with regards to efficiently and effectively allocating work to our operatives and offering an appointment based service for our tenants / customers.</p> <p>Moving forwards the DRS software will also enable the Council to schedule our day to day inspections and other planned repair and maintenance works in real-time, allowing us to optimise our resources as the working day evolves.</p>
1.04	<p>The Business Systems Team and IT Support</p> <p>Members of both the Business Systems Team and central IT Support Department have been instrumental in the installation and implementation of the DRS software. Both sections have participated in the management group and relevant sub-groups created to ensure the development and completion of key specific pieces of work.</p> <p><u>Council Server Upgrades</u> The Council operates two on-premises data centres. Following conversations with our central IT Department, it was understood that the housing system servers (including OPEN and Total-Mobile) required upgrading during 2021-2022.</p>

	<p>The servers hosting Capita OPEN and Capita Total-Mobile were previously on Windows Server 2012 R2. Microsoft offers extended support for these servers until October 2023, however the Council had planned to upgrade these servers to either Windows Server 2016 or 2019 during 2021-2022. These upgrades were completed in alignment with the Capita OPEN and Total-Mobile upgrades.</p> <p><u>Capita Open Housing upgrade to version 17</u> The Council use Capita OPEN Housing/Contractor v16.00.01 and required to move to v17.xx during 2021-2022.</p> <p>The DRS tender document clearly stated that “the system must have the functionality for full integration with the Council’s Capita Open Housing system (v17)”, therefore, the DRS implementation (installation stage) could only commence after completion of the upgrade.</p> <p>From a dependency perspective, any Capita OPEN system upgrades and implementations are very resource-intensive and time consuming for IT and other teams. Similarly, the DRS implementation requires the same intensity and level of resources utilised on the OPEN upgrade.</p> <p>Though DRS was planned to be implemented after the upgrade, preparatory DRS work was run in parallel and carefully managed to avoid over-committing limited resources.</p> <p>The Business Systems Team and other teams across the Council worked on various system changes and reporting changes. They were also responsible for the SOR uploads and mapping along with completing changes to the DRS and Capita OPEN systems with regards to locations, operative skill types, working hours and starting & finishing (home) locations.</p>
1.05	<p>Schedule of Rates (SOR) Review</p> <p>The Council were required to procure a new set of schedule of rates that would enable the Capita OPEN system to correctly capture time and cost relating to all work tasks (repairs etc.) logged on the housing system. These SOR’s were due for renewal to the latest version to ensure times and costs were accurate and up to date, and to allow the DRS software to correctly calculate time allocated for each work task, thus enabling the operatives work to be planned in during the working day.</p>
1.06	<p>DRS District Sectors</p> <p>The map below identifies the sectors / areas DRS software will utilise in order to plan the work requests before allocating to an operative.</p>



1.07

Milestones achieved and Next Steps of the Pilot

The Council will be progressing with the next steps of the pilot before the system is placed into a fully live environment / position.

The pilot commenced with one sector of the County to ascertain if the system worked correctly and so that specific processes and reports could be tested and reviewed.

The next steps of the plan is to open up further sectors of the County and to integrate these sectors into the pilot until all sectors and all operatives are allocated and utilising the DRS software.

The project plan attached at Appendix 3 identifies the tasks achieved since December 2021.

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	<p>Staff Support There are concerns about the retention of staff to support delivery of the project. IT support is critical alongside staff in key support and delivery teams (Planning Team, Customer Contact Centre and Repairs).</p> <p>The Asset Service Team have made changes to the structure of the team to increase resilience, succession planning and robustness to the delivery model and departments risk register. Other teams have similar resilience plans in place.</p>
2.02	<p>Ongoing and early engagement with the IT department has ensured that the internal IT resource requirements beyond the Housing team can be built into resource plans as part of the Councils broader Digital Strategy. The associated costs will be funded from the HRA.</p>

3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT
3.01	<p>The Council is looking to utilise a tried and tested system with a track record of delivering efficiencies and new technologies as it has done over many years.</p> <p>There is a risk that should the Council fail to fully implement the DRS software, then it shall lose the opportunity to secure significant efficiency savings and to transform its approach to improving our customer focus, productivity, performance and health and safety.</p>

4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT
4.01	<p>Prior to the DRS going live, the service consulted with the all operatives via a workshop with invitations to the various Unions and Trade Union Representatives.</p> <p>The service also consulted separately with the Unions, teams across the service and portfolio along with the Tenants Federation.</p> <p>The portfolio also held a Member workshops, where the service presented a report covering DRS and some of the challenges it was working through in late 2022.</p>

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	<p>Appendix 1 - DRS Power Point Presentation for Operatives and back office support staff.</p> <p>Appendix 2 - DRS Sector Map</p> <p>Appendix 3 - Project Plan</p>

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	N/A

7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
7.01	<p>Contact Officer: Sean O'Donnell, Service Manager - Housing Assets Telephone: 01352 701642 E-mail: Sean.ODonnell@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
8.01	<p>Dynamic Resource Scheduler (DRS): DRS is a scheduling software solution which allows the client to seamlessly integrate appointed, planned and responsive, last-minute work across a field-based workforce. It will enable the Council to meet its commitments, deliver excellent customer service, reduce travel time and costs, and ensure more tasks are completed in a single day.</p> <p>Information Technology (IT): An IT organisation (information technology) is the department within a company that is charged with establishing, monitoring and maintaining information technology systems and services.</p> <p>Capita OPEN: The Council's Housing System utilised to record assets, repairs, tenant details etc.</p> <p>HRA: The Housing Revenue Account</p> <p>RAMS: Risk and Method Statements used in construction works to enable a Contractor to safely plan and identify how any risks will be mitigated or complied with.</p> <p>Financial Year: the period of 12 months commencing on 1 April.</p> <p>PDA Solution: Mobile hand held device used for capturing stock data directly linked to our asset database.</p>

<p>Schedule of Rates (SORs): is a list of staff, labour and plant hire rates that a company or department will use for pricing cost reimbursable instructed day-work or work tasks.</p>
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