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| Briefing for: | Places OSSC – Chair |
| Title: | New Housing Allocations Scheme – Progress Report |
| Purpose of briefing: | Information |
| Lead Officer: | Kwabena Obiri, Housing Choice & Applications Manager |
| Date: | 26 th February 2026 |

1. SUMMARY

2. This report provides Overview & Scrutiny with a comprehensive update on the implementation of the revised Housing Allocations Scheme. It outlines the background and purpose of the scheme, the implementation process, the significant surge in demand experienced following go-live, and the current operational position. The report also sets out the actions taken to manage the demand surge, explains the rationale for introducing Working Household Contribution points (Working Community Adjustment), and details the timetable for implementation, monitoring and review.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Members are asked to:
- 3.2 Note the progress made in implementing the revised Housing Allocations Scheme.
- 3.3 Note the scale of demand following implementation and the current application and assessment position.
- 3.4 Note the actions taken to manage the demand surge and improve throughput.
- 3.5 Note the introduction and planned implementation of the Working Household Contribution points.
- 3.6 Comment on the proposed timetable and monitoring arrangements.

4. Background and Purpose of the Scheme

5. The Housing Allocations Scheme (2024) represents a comprehensive revision of the Council's previous 2021 scheme. It was developed to ensure that social housing is allocated fairly, transparently and in compliance with statutory requirements under Part VI of the Housing Act 1996. The revised scheme replaces a band-based framework with a points-based system, enabling housing

need to be weighted more clearly and consistently.

6. Demand for social housing in the borough continues to significantly exceed supply. Only a limited number of social housing properties become available each year, requiring a robust and defensible framework to ensure that homes are allocated to households in the greatest need. The revised scheme was therefore designed to improve clarity, support effective use of limited housing stock, and align allocations more closely with assessed housing need.

7. Challenges Arising During Implementation – Pre Go-Live Delivery Delays and Demand Surge

8. Policy Readiness Following Cabinet Approval

9. The revised Housing Allocations Scheme was formally approved by Cabinet in May 2024. At that point, the policy itself was complete, legally reviewed, and ready for implementation. The primary dependency for go live was the reconfiguration of the Council's housing IT systems to support the new points based framework and the associated online application process.

10. Following Cabinet approval of the revised Housing Allocations Scheme in May 2024, the Council set a clear and timebound expectation that the scheme would be implemented within six months, reflecting standard delivery timelines for a policy led system reconfiguration of this nature.

11. This placed the intended go live target in November 2024.

12. This expectation is evidenced in early project documentation and correspondence, which consistently framed the post Cabinet period as an implementation phase rather than a policy development phase. Internal planning assumed that system build, configuration, testing and controlled transition could be achieved between May and November 2024, subject to contractor delivery performance.

13. From the Council's perspective, therefore:

12.1 May 2024 – Policy approved, complete and implementation ready

12.2 June–November 2024 – System delivery, testing and transition window

12.3 November 2024 – Target month for go live.

14. This target was not met, due to delivery failures by the Council's systems contractor rather than any delay in policy readiness or internal decision making.

15. Early Risk Identification and Contractor Concerns

16. From the outset of project mobilisation in early 2024, the Council identified material risks associated with delivery by Capita. These risks were formally recorded in the project risk and issues logs and included concerns regarding:
- 16.1. The contractor's ability to commit appropriately skilled and stable resources
 - 16.2. High turnover and lack of continuity within Capita's delivery teams
 - 16.3. Risks relating to the quality and completeness of system configuration
 - 16.4. The Council also explicitly raised concerns regarding the assignment of a specific Capita project officer, based on previous delivery failures on comparable system implementations. Despite these concerns being raised at an early stage, the contractor proceeded with the assignment.

17. Senior Management Direction on Transitioning Existing Applicants

18. Senior officers explored options to transition existing applicants without requiring reapplication. Capita advised this was not achievable within the system design and timescales, and that a full reapplication approach was required to ensure data integrity and legal compliance.
19. By October 2024, correspondence shows that the Council had consumed a significant proportion of contracted consultancy days while still lacking a stable or testable system configuration. Senior officers explicitly questioned how the project could be nearing completion when tangible outputs remained limited.
20. Subsequent contractor staff departures, replanning exercises and revised delivery schedules further pushed implementation beyond the original November 2024 target and into 2025, ultimately necessitating the full reapplication approach that senior management had sought to avoid.

21. Delivery Failures and Escalation (Mid 2024 to Late 2024)

22. Although the policy had been approved in May 2024, progress on system delivery during the subsequent months was minimal. This period was characterised by:
- 22.1. Repeated delays in agreeing Statements of Work and delivery schedules
 - 22.2. Poor availability of assigned Capita consultants
 - 22.3. Cancellation and rescheduling of agreed development sessions at short notice
23. The formal project kick off did not take place until August 2024, significantly later than originally anticipated. Even following kick off, delivery momentum remained limited, with planned development activity repeatedly deferred due to contractor availability constraints.
24. By late October 2024, it became evident that the project was not being delivered effectively. Senior officers escalated concerns with Capita, highlighting the lack of

tangible outputs despite a significant number of consultancy days being charged. As a result, senior management intervention was required. The below illustrates the expected delivery target against actual delivery:

25. Delivery Timetable – Council Targets vs Actual Outcomes

26. The table below clarifies the Council’s intended milestones against actual delivery outcomes.

| Period | Council Expectation | Actual Position | Target Met |
|--------------|---|------------------|------------|
| May 2024 | Cabinet approval – scheme ready for build | Policy complete | Yes |
| Jun–Aug 2024 | System build mobilisation | Minimal progress | No |
| Sep–Dec 2024 | Core system configuration | Repeated delays | No |
| Nov –2024 | Original Go Live Date | Scrapped | No |

27. Senior Management Intervention and Project Restart

28. In February 2025, following sustained delivery failures, Capita’s assigned project officer and project manager both left the project.

29. As a result, project activity did not transition immediately into a recovery phase. Instead, the project entered a period of uncertainty during March 2025, during which planned meetings were cancelled, delivery momentum was lost, and no substantive progress was made.

30. Only following further escalation and board-level engagement in late April 2025 did Capita, operating as MRI Software, re-mobilise a replacement project team and re-establish delivery governance. From that point onwards, delivery activity gradually resumed under tighter Council oversight.

31. Replacement of Project Team and Recovery of Delivery

32. Following the project restart, a new project team was mobilised under MRI Software. Delivery plans were rebase-lined, governance strengthened, and confidence in delivery gradually improved. The Council maintained daily delivery meetings during this period to tightly control scope, sequencing, and risk, ensuring that delivery issues were surfaced and addressed in real time.

33. Implementation Process

34. The revised Housing Allocations Scheme was implemented with a formal go-live date of 24 September 2025. Implementation required significant system, process and communication changes, including configuration of the points-based framework within the housing IT system, introduction of a new online application process, and a requirement for all existing applicants to reapply under the new rules.

The scheme went live as planned, with transitional arrangements in place to protect existing applicants during the initial period.

35. Challenges Arising During Implementation – Demand Surge and Current Position

36. A key challenge following implementation was the scale and immediacy of the surge in housing applications, which significantly exceeded historic norms.

| Period | Applications Received | Relative Change |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------|
| Previous scheme – 12-month monthly average | c. 270 | Baseline |
| New scheme – partial first month (from 24 Sept 2025) | 642 | +138% |
| New scheme – first full month (October 2025) | 1,152 | +326% |

37. As at 24 February 2026, application volumes remain high, although throughput has improved following targeted mitigation measures. The current operational position is summarised below.

| Measure | Position |
|---|----------|
| Total applications received since go-live (24 September 2025) | 3,464 |
| Applications assessed (all outcomes) | 1,682 |
| Applications currently live on the Housing Register | 1,099 |

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|--|-------|
| Applications awaiting assessment or verification | 1,782 |
|--|-------|

38. Actions Taken to Address the Demand Surge

39. To address the unprecedented demand and stabilise performance, a series of mitigation measures were implemented. These included deploying additional staffing capacity through overtime and cross-service support, streamlining assessment and verification processes, and prioritising high-need cases.

Assessment capacity was increased to up to 17 assessors during the January and February and this reduced high priority applications (70 points and above) have now been assessed and are actively bidding for properties. The remaining 1782 applications are expected to achieve an award of 0-69 points which in this current climate will not secure a family sized general needs property.

40. Working Household Contribution (Working Community Adjustment)

41. Early monitoring of the points-based scheme identified that some working households previously recognised under the former banding system risked being unintentionally disadvantaged. This was particularly evident for long-standing applicants whose waiting time was overtaken by applicants awarded homelessness-related time points following recent duty decisions.

42. In response, a Working Household Contribution (Working Community Adjustment) has been developed. This introduces an additional points uplift for eligible households where at least one adult is in sustained paid employment. The adjustment applies to Housing Register applicants and Existing Social Housing Tenants, but does not apply to Accepted Homeless Households, who already receive statutory priority.

The adjustment is designed to be targeted, proportionate and legally robust, ensuring that working households are not disadvantaged by the transition while maintaining compliance with reasonable preference requirements.

43. Timetable and Next Steps

| Activity | Timescale |
|--|-------------------|
| Allocations Scheme go-live | 24 September 2025 |
| Completion of high-priority assessments | January 2026 |
| Implementation of Working Household Contribution | March 2026 |

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|--|-------------------------------|
| Completion of low-priority assessments | April 2026 |
| Ongoing monitoring and reporting | Continuous |
| Formal scheme review | 12 months post-implementation |

44. Implications and Risks

No unbudgeted financial pressures have arisen. Legal compliance and equalities impacts continue to be monitored, with mitigation introduced where unintended impacts have been identified