

## Notice of Non-Key Executive Decision

<b>Subject Heading:</b>	<b>Planning, Building Control and Land Charges System Replacement Project</b>
<b>Decision Maker:</b>	Neil Stubbings, Strategic Director of Place.
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Graham Williamson, Cabinet Member for Regeneration.
<b>ELT Lead:</b>	Neil Stubbings, Strategic Director of Place.
<b>Report Author and contact details:</b>	Anthony Akadiri, Project Manager Anthony.Akadiri@havering.gov.uk
<b>Policy context:</b>	<p>The Council's current Planning, Building Control, and Local Land Charges system (Ocella) will cease operations, with all vendor support ending in December 2026. This presents significant operational, compliance, and security risks from January 2027 if no replacement is in place.</p> <p>This project supports the Council objectives for digital modernisation, risk mitigation, and improved resident services.</p>
<b>Financial summary:</b>	The cost of procuring and implementing a new replacement

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	<p>business system (supplier costs) over 5 years is <b>£328,000</b>.</p> <p>This will be funded from Revenue as per Growth Bid (to be approved by Cabinet in March 2026).</p>
<b>Relevant Overview &amp; Scrutiny Sub Committee:</b>	Place OSSC.
<b>Is this decision exempt from being called-in?</b>	The decision will be exempt from call in as it is a Non key Decision.

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**The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives**

People - Supporting our residents to stay safe and well

Place - A great place to live, work and enjoy

Resources - Enabling a resident-focused and resilient Council x

## Part A – Report seeking decision

### DETAIL OF THE DECISION REQUESTED AND RECOMMENDED ACTION

**Decision:** Approval to procure and implement a planning, building control and local land charges system via a direct award to Idox Software Limited. The contract will be entered into for a term of three years with the option to extend for two further periods of 12 months each at a cost of £328,000 through the Vertical Applications Solutions (VAS) framework Lot 3.

### AUTHORITY UNDER WHICH DECISION IS MADE

#### Delegated authority per Constitution Part 3, Responsibility for Functions

Scheme 3.3.3

Powers common to all Strategic Directors:

#### 1. General section

1.1 To take any steps, and take any decisions, necessary for the proper management and administration of their allocated directorate, in accordance with applicable Council policies and procedures.

#### 4. Contracts

4.2 To award all contracts with a total contract value of below £1,000,000 other than contracts covered by Contract Procedure Rule 16.3

### STATEMENT OF THE REASONS FOR THE DECISION

The Council's current Planning, Building Control, and Local Land Charges system (Ocella) will cease operations, with all vendor support ending in December 2026. This presents significant operational, compliance, and security risks to the Council from January 2027 if no replacement is in place.

The decision sought is to agree the procurement approach to direct award to Idox Software Limited at a value of £328,000 for 3 years with the option to extend for two further periods of 12 months each ) via the VAS framework as this provides the path of least resistance in terms of time and cost, enabling the Council to replace a critical line-of-business system before it goes out of support.

Idox is the only supplier that can deliver an integrated solution for Planning, Building Control and Local Land Charges services that will meet the business requirements. It

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is also the only supplier that is in the VAS framework that can also deliver on the Council's requirements.

The compliant route to procurement is a direct award via the VAS framework that provides a measure of guarantee to deliver a replacement system by the end of December 2026. An open market competitive tender will take significantly longer to complete (estimate to more than 18 months) and will present significant operational, and security risks if we continue to use Ocella which will no longer be supported from January 2027.

Additionally, the recommended approach ensures delivery of a Minimum Viable Product (MVP) and will work within the funding envelope of the Growth Bid for 2026/27 - 2028/29 (subject to Full Council approval in March 2026). A full-scale procurement to meet all identified requirements may exceed this budget, whereas the MVP approach allows for essential functionality now, with scope for future enhancements.

While the cost of maintaining Ocella is lower than implementing a new system, the investment is justified by the anticipated return on investment achieved through:

- Operational Efficiency: Streamlined workflows and reduced manual effort.
- Compliance & Risk Mitigation: Statutory adherence and improved data security.
- Customer Experience: Enhanced digital engagement and self-service capabilities.
- Future proofing: Integration with GIS, CRM, and HMLR systems.

Social Value: Support for local employment and environmental sustainability.

## **OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

### **Option 1: Do Nothing**

Continuing with Ocella after support ends involves no immediate financial cost but exposes the Council to significant operational and compliance risks. Without vendor support, bugs, security vulnerabilities, and system failures would go unresolved. This creates a high likelihood of data breaches, downtime, and statutory non-compliance. Overall, the option is not viable due to severe risk and potentially high unquantified long-term costs.

### **Not viable**

### **Option 2: Procure and Implement a New Off-the-Shelf System**

This option involves procuring a modern replacement, with Idox identified as the strongest fit due to functionality, clean UI, and alignment with requirements. It would substantially reduce operational risk, improve service delivery, and ensure long-term compliance, though it requires high upfront investment and significant change management. The total cost over term of the contract for three years with the option to extend for two further periods of 12 months each is approximately **£328,000**, with implementation expected by December 2026. This is the recommended and most viable short-term option.

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### Recommended

#### **Option 3: Extend Ocella Support via Third Party**

Commissioning a third-party supplier for post-2026 support offers no assurance of quality, system stability, or compliance. It would leave major gaps in security, functionality, and regulatory alignment, as external providers cannot fully support or enhance the core system. Costs are unknown but likely poor value compared to the risk level.

**Not viable.**

#### **Option 4: Collaborate with Other Councils**

A joint procurement or shared-support model was explored with Arun District Council and Fareham Borough Council, but neither council is willing nor aligned to provide formal support. Timelines and operating models are incompatible, and internal IT lacks capacity to maintain or enhance the system. With unclear cost benefits and no practical delivery route.

**Not viable.**

#### **Option 5: Custom Build Using Low-Code/No-Code Platforms**

Building a custom system using platforms like OutSystems or Netcall offers long-term strategic potential, providing tailored functionality and flexible integration. However, it requires substantial resources, a 10-year roadmap, and cannot realistically deliver a fully operational system by December 2026—only a limited MVP. With high complexity and a cost of around £1.69m.

**Not viable in the short term.**

### **PRE-DECISION CONSULTATION**

Not required.

### **NAME AND JOB TITLE OF STAFF MEMBER ADVISING THE DECISION-MAKER**

Name: Anthony Akadiri

Designation: Project Manager

Signature: Anthony Akadiri

Date: 02/03/2026

## Part B - Assessment of implications and risks

### LEGAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

This report seeks authority to direct award a contract to Idox Software Limited through Lot 3 of the VAS framework.

The Council also has a general power of competence under Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 to do anything an individual can do, subject to any statutory constraints on the Council's powers. None of the constraints on the Council's Section 1 power are engaged by this decision.

The proposed contract value is £328,000 over 5 years (3+1+1) which is above the services contract threshold of £207,720 (inc. of VAT) in the Procurement Act 2023 (PA23). The procurement of the contract must comply with PA23 and the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.

The body of this report confirms that officers will direct award a contract via Lot 3 of VAS framework and in accordance with the rules of that framework, which was procured in compliance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015. The proposed award complies with the Council's Contracts Procedure Rules 20.4 as it is a direct award through a framework that was set up in accordance with Regulation 33 of the Public Contracts Regulations (2015).

### FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

This report seeks to recommend a contract award using the Vertical Application Solutions (VAS) Framework, with the supplier Idox Software Limited, on a 3+1+1-year contract. The current software used by the authority is reaching its end of life and will not be extended beyond December 2026 by the supplier.

Given the risk to operations for Planning, Building Control and Land Charges activity, the Council is recommended to direct award from the framework. The actual costs of the contract including implementation and software licensing are subject to agreement but the below outlines the estimated cost:

<b>Supplier Costs Only</b>	<b>2026/27</b>
Annual Subscription	42,000
Implementation	118,000
<b>Total (subject to agreement)</b>	<b>160,000</b>

The implementation would be completed within 2026/27; therefore, the annual subscription would remain a continuing cost at £42,000 plus indexation (inflation) for the

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remaining years of the contract. The total value of the contract is therefore estimated at £328,000 over the maximum period of 5 years.

As this would be a Software as a Service (SaaS) product, the cost impacts the revenue budget. The authority has set its budget for 2026/27, and this requirement has been provisioned for alongside project implementation costs. Value for Money is difficult to assess at this stage because the outgoing system is not comparable and the new system is the only one on the Framework that can support all three services in one. The other option above for no code/low code (i.e. building design internally) would require considerable investment and time which is not practical at this stage.

### **Financial Risks**

There are several risks to be mindful of in relation to this decision.

A key risk is having sufficient time to deliver the new system for January 2027, and the service will need to accept and manage this risk. The service is particularly subject to legislative changes which require updates to the software systems they use. For example, the Building Control Levy is due to come into effect from October 2026, and the service will be required to manage this risk until the new system is operational.

Like all system implementations, it will be important that staff utilising the software are suitably trained before 'go live' and embrace the system in a positive way. Training will therefore need to be provided. Appropriate staff will have needed to be involved within the implementation and mobilisations periods as they have been during the specification and pre award phase.

The authority is choosing a system that is already operational elsewhere and therefore the supplier knows what is necessary to deliver the required product to the specification. Therefore, a fixed price should be possible to agree and that should limit the risk of cost increases outside of indexation.

### **HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS (AND ACCOMMODATION IMPLICATIONS WHERE RELEVANT)**

The recommendations made in this report do not give rise to any identifiable HR risks or implications that would affect either the Council or its workforce.

### **EQUALITIES AND SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS**

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires the Council, when exercising its functions, to have 'due regard' to: (i) The need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010; (ii) The need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share protected characteristics and those who do not, and; (iii) Foster good relations between those who have protected characteristics and those who do not. Note: 'Protected characteristics' are age, disability, gender

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reassignment, marriage and civil partnerships, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex/gender, and sexual orientation.

The Council is committed to all of the above in the provision, procurement and commissioning of its services, and the employment of its workforce. In addition, the Council is also committed to improving the quality of life and wellbeing for all Havering residents in respect of socio-economics and health determinants.

***No EQHIA required as like-for-like system replacement.***

### **ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS**

There are no direct implications or impact to the environment or climate change relating to the replacement of the business system.

The council will embrace the Environment and Climate Agenda both strategically and globally through its development of footprint reduction initiatives, Climate Action plans and externally delivered services. The council will strive to minimise negative impacts and optimise positive opportunities delivering our Climate change action plan.

### **HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS**

No negative impact anticipated; improved services support wellbeing indirectly.

### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None.

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**Part C – Record of decision**

I have made this executive decision in accordance with authority delegated to me by the Leader of the Council and in compliance with the requirements of the Constitution.

**Decision**

Proposal agreed

**Details of decision maker**

Signed



Neil Stubbings  
Strategic Director of Place

Date: 5<sup>th</sup> March 2026

**Lodging this notice**

The signed decision notice must be delivered to Committee Services, in the Town Hall.

**For use by Committee Administration**

This notice was lodged with me on \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_