

GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

REQUEST FOR MAYORAL DECISION – MD2951

Title: Mobility funding and extension of IT contract and Housing Moves scheme changes

Executive summary:

Approval is sought to fund and extend the contract for the IT hosting and support for the Mayor's mobility schemes (Seaside & Country Homes and Housing Moves) for one year from 1 April 2022. Current contractual arrangements and funding approval will come to an end on 31 March 2022 (approved via MD2209), although there is an option to extend the current contract by the second of two one-year extensions (the previous one-year extension was agreed via DD2521). This will enable the continuation of these two schemes.

This paper also seeks approval for changes to Housing Moves, to focus its lettings on victims/survivors of domestic abuse and former rough sleepers and to amend property contribution arrangements. The main objectives of the changes are to more effectively target the scheme on the Mayor's priorities, better fulfil applicants' expectations and recognise boroughs' constraints in contributing properties.

The two schemes are strategically important for the delivery of London Housing Strategy priorities, and the GLA is in contract with each of the London boroughs to administer Seaside & Country Homes.

Decision:

That the Mayor approves:

- i. expenditure of up to £35,000 for IT hosting and support for the Mayor's housing mobility schemes in 2022-23
- ii. the exercise of an existing contractual option for the second of two 12-month extensions to the Authority's contract with Probrand Ltd for continued IT hosting and support for the schemes
- iii. changes to Housing Moves to focus the scheme's lettings on victims/survivors of domestic abuse and former rough sleepers; and amend property contribution arrangements.

Mayor of London

I confirm that I do not have any disclosable pecuniary interests in the proposed decision and take the decision in compliance with the Code of Conduct for elected Members of the Authority.

The above request has my approval.

Signature:



Date:

31/3/22

PART I – NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE TO THE MAYOR

Decision required – supporting report

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1. The Mayor operates two housing mobility schemes – Seaside & Country Homes and Housing Moves.

Seaside & Country Homes (SCH)

- 1.2. SCH enables older social tenants to move out of the capital, freeing up homes which can then be used by social landlords to house Londoners in need. In 2020-21, there were 145 moves, freeing up 364 bedrooms. The scheme creates significant financial savings for London boroughs, and it provides a positive housing option to older Londoners. It was established by the Greater London Council in 1968 and was devolved from the then Department of Communities and Local Government to the GLA in 2011 (approved through MD558). Since 1 April 2013, SCH has been funded by the London boroughs on a fee-per-letting basis (approved through MD1070), and the GLA is in contract with every London borough to deliver the scheme.

Housing Moves

- 1.3. Housing Moves is the Mayor's scheme that was set up in 2012 to enable existing social tenants in London to move from one borough to another (approved via MD522). It initially prioritised under-occupiers; those in work and training; and those giving care. Overcrowded households were added to the priority list in 2015. Since 2019, the scheme has also provided priority pathways for victims/survivors of domestic abuse (working in partnership with the Pan-London Housing Reciprocal scheme) and former rough sleepers moving on from Clearing House properties.¹
- 1.4. Boroughs are expected to contribute the equivalent to 5 per cent of their lettings each year, with an equalisation process whereby no borough contributes more lettings than its residents receive in any given year (that is, moves in does not exceed moves out). The G15 (group of London's largest housing associations) contributes circa 300 lettings a year, with their one-bed properties prioritised for former rough sleepers. The scheme also receives relets from the 63 homes at the East Village that were made available to Housing Moves applicants in perpetuity following the 2012 Olympic Games. In addition, the scheme will receive 10 per cent of the affordable rented homes to be delivered by the Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation (OPDC).
- 1.5. Since its launch in May 2012, almost 38,000 households have applied for the scheme, and there have been 1,650 moves.

IT system

- 1.6. Probrand Ltd is contracted by the GLA to provide hosting and support (at a fixed annual cost) and IT development work (as and when required, and as specified by the GLA) (approved through MD2209, DD1302, DD1488 and DD2096). The initial contract term ended on 31 March 2021. However, the contract contains an option for up to two extensions of one year each, exercisable by the fact that there is no material change to the services for which the IT system is required. It still covers just the two mobility schemes, and the overall nature of the contract is not affected. The first of the two one-year extensions was approved via DD2521 in February 2021. Probrand sub-contracts the provision of the above services to Home Connections, which developed the IT system for the schemes.
- 1.7. This MD seeks approval to fund a further year of IT hosting and support, and to exercise the second of the two one-year contract extensions. The cost will be a maximum of £35,000.

¹ Clearing House provides access to over 3,500 social rented flats earmarked for rough sleepers moving on from hostels or the street.

- 1.8. A contract extension rather than reprocurement is being proposed. This is because a reprocurement could potentially result in a new contractor being selected and a new system needing to be built. It would not be advisable at this stage, given current financial constraints, to devote significant resource to the development of a new system. The ultimate intention, however, is to procure a new contract to be in place by 1 April 2023 at the latest, subject to further approval being secured. A decision to extend the existing contract needs to be made at this point to assure contractors of the continuation well ahead of the current end of the first contract extension on 31 March 2022 so that they can continue to resource it.

Changes to Housing Moves

- 1.9. There have been considerable changes to the allocations and lettings landscape across London since the launch of Housing Moves, including a significant fall in turnover in the social rented sector.
- 1.10. During 2020-21, boroughs contributed 88 properties to the scheme, only 17 per cent of their total expected contribution. During the same year, there were 141 Housing Moves lettings. At the same time, a record number of households applied to join the scheme (4,156) and there was a record number of households registered (4,135).
- 1.11. Following reviews undertaken six months and then two years after the launch of the scheme, a further review was therefore considered necessary to ensure the scheme remains effective and strategically relevant in the current context. Consultants to undertake the review were procured through a competitive tender process in early 2021, with the review being undertaken between March and June, and the report being completed in September.
- 1.12. The key finding from the review is that in recent years, due to pressures on local authority resources having intensified, there is a wide and increasing gap between the supply of properties to the scheme and demand for them from applicants. As a result, the chance of securing a move for most people registered are extremely remote, potentially leading to false expectations for many. In addition, tenants are applying to Housing Moves not because they need or specifically want to move to another borough, but because the level of demand within their own borough is such that they are unable to secure a move locally. The review concluded that it is reasonable to consider how the scheme can better deliver options to meet pan-London and local strategic priorities, and that refocusing the scheme on the most urgent needs could clarify its purpose and strategic aims.
- 1.13. Having considered a range of options to address the above issues, the proposed approach is as follows:
- instead of the scheme being open to all social housing tenants, eligibility will be limited to victims/survivors of domestic abuse who are current social tenants, or are moving on from safe accommodation; and former rough sleepers moving on from Clearing House, or other similar accommodation and services
 - instead of boroughs being expected to contribute five per cent of their lettings each year, the core supply of homes will come from the G15 contribution of circa 300 properties a year. Additionally, the relets at the East Village and the agreed percentage of the OPDC properties will be included in the scheme.
- 1.14. There are other options enabling London's social tenants who need or want to move across borough boundaries to do so. These include housing associations accessing their own stock in other areas, mutual exchange schemes and – launched in 2013 - Homefinder UK.²

² This is an independent national mobility scheme that matches tenants to available social housing properties nationwide.

2. Objectives and expected outcomes

IT system

- 2.1. The key objective of extending the IT system contract is to enable both mobility schemes to continue to operate, in order to deliver in accordance with agreed policies.

Changes to Housing Moves

- 2.2. The proposed changes will ensure that the Housing Moves scheme:
- aligns with Mayoral priorities, specifically in relation to:
 - tackling rough sleeping, including by freeing up much-needed accommodation with support for rough sleepers ready to move on from hostels or other services
 - supporting victims/survivors of domestic abuse
 - aligns with borough priorities, by enabling more borough lettings to be made in line with their local allocation policies
 - helps to manage Londoners' expectations by ensuring that only those tenants who have a reasonable chance of success are eligible to apply.

3. Equality comments

- 3.1. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, as public authorities, the Mayor and the GLA are subject to a public-sector equality duty and must have 'due regard' to the need to:
- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
 - advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not
 - foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 3.2. Protected characteristics under section 149 of the Equality Act are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, and marriage or civil partnership status (all except the last being 'relevant' protected characteristics).
- 3.3. Characteristics of victims/survivors of domestic abuse (national figures) are as follows:
- Gender: women are much more likely than men to be the victims of high-risk or severe domestic abuse. Three-quarters of domestic abuse homicide victims in London between 2005 and 2020 were women.
 - Age: younger people are more likely to be subject to interpersonal violence. Most high-risk victims are in their 20s or 30s. Those under 25 are the most likely to suffer interpersonal violence.
 - Pregnancy: nearly one in three women who suffer from domestic abuse during their lifetime report that the first incidence of violence happened while they were pregnant.
 - Separation: domestic abuse is highest amongst those who have separated, followed by those who are divorced or single.

- Drug and alcohol use: victims of abuse have a higher rate of drug and/or alcohol misuse (whether it starts before or after the abuse); at least 20 per cent of high-risk victims of abuse report using drugs and/or alcohol.
- Mental health: 40 per cent of high-risk victims of abuse report mental health difficulties.

3.4. Informed by the London Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Needs Assessment, the Mayor's Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy highlights that London faces some specific challenges in supporting survivors of domestic abuse, particularly to meet the needs of some Black and Minority Ethnic groups; LGBTQ+ people; young women; Deaf and disabled people; male survivors; and people with multiple disadvantages. As outlined above, those with protected characteristics of gender, age, pregnancy and disability are over-represented among victims/survivors of domestic abuse.

3.5. Of those seen sleeping rough in 2020-21:

- 50 per cent were non-UK nationals
- 4 per cent were from Gypsy/Romany/Traveller communities
- 44 per cent had a mental health need
- 16 per cent were women
- most (59 per cent) were in the 26-45 age group
- 10 per cent were under 26 years old
- 10 per cent were over 55.

3.6. Those with protected characteristics of race and disability are over-represented among rough sleepers. One of the two groups that it is proposed will be eligible for Housing Moves is former rough sleepers. By moving on from Clearing House properties they will free up these properties for those ready to move on from hostels, who in turn will free up hostel spaces for those on the streets. This is likely to have positive impacts on Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Londoners and those with disabilities. As the majority of people sleeping rough are men, more men than women are likely to access these services.

3.7. An equalities impact assessment has been undertaken to assess the impact of the proposed changes to Housing Moves. The key points are as follows:

- As the likelihood of those registered on Housing Moves receiving a letting is so remote, the proposed change is likely to have a zero impact on most applicants. Those other than former rough sleepers and victims/survivors of domestic abuse form 95 per cent of current applicants overall which equates to just under 3,700 applications. Between 1st April 2020 and 31st March 2021 there were 90 lets to this group which is 2.5 per cent of those currently registered. Most of these registered (81 per cent) are female, more than half are aged between 30-44 years and 18 per cent are disabled. 22 per cent are White British, 18 per cent Black African and 18 per cent Black Caribbean.
- The proposed change could have a negative impact on the small number of applicants who both will be ineligible for the scheme in the future but also may have received a letting should the scheme have continued in its current form. Using applicants (other than former rough sleepers and victims/survivors of domestic abuse) that have moved through the scheme since April 2019 as a proxy for this group, most (68 per cent) are female, 60 per cent are aged between 30-44 years and 12 per cent are disabled. 27 per cent are Black African, 19 per cent Black Caribbean and 12 per cent White British.

- The proposed change is likely to have a positive impact on former rough sleepers and victims/survivors of domestic abuse eligible for the scheme. Applicants from these groups who are registered or have already moved through the scheme have the following characteristics. There is an even split between males and females, with most former rough sleepers being male and almost all victims/survivors of domestic abuse female. Almost half (47 per cent) are aged between 30-44 years, with former rough sleepers typically older (with an average age of 46 years). Over a quarter (26 per cent) are disabled. 23 per cent are White British, 14 per cent Black Caribbean and 12 per cent Black African.

4. Other considerations

Key risks and issues

Risk description	Rating	Mitigating action
Insufficient demand from applicants for the properties contributed	Green	<p>London's Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Needs Assessment demonstrates the unmet demand for (alternative) accommodation for victims/survivors of domestic abuse who are social tenants, and who are moving on from refuges and other safe accommodation.</p> <p>London's Rough Sleeping Plan of Action similarly highlights the unmet demand for longer-term accommodation from former rough sleepers. There are currently 126 Clearing House tenants registered on Housing Moves.</p>

Links to Mayoral strategies and priorities

- 4.1. The Mayor's London Housing Strategy, published in May 2018, contains the following policies relevant to the mobility schemes:

Given the overwhelming need for more affordable homes, London's existing affordable homes should be protected and utilised as efficiently as possible (policy 4.3).

To support this policy, the Mayor has taken, or will take, the following actions in the coming years:

- *operate the Housing Moves and Seaside and Country Homes schemes to support social tenants to move where they wish or need to do so*
- *increase the number of affordable homes available for pan-London moves by requiring a proportion of new affordable homes developed through the Mayor's Affordable Homes Programme to be available to social tenants through the Housing Moves scheme*
- *prioritise the rehousing of social tenants who are victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence through the Housing Moves scheme.*

- 4.2. The London Housing Strategy also details the Mayor's commitment to reducing rough sleeping and homelessness.

- 4.3. The Strategy also contains policies that support the priority pathways for former rough sleepers and victims of domestic abuse:

He [the Mayor] will also work with councils to try and prevent homelessness and help homeless Londoners into sustainable accommodation. This includes investing in places for homeless Londoners to live, and supporting joint efforts between councils to accommodate homeless Londoners. He will also focus on homelessness that is caused by violence against women and girls.

- 4.4. The Mayor's Rough Sleeping Plan of Action seeks to maximise options for those moving on from Clearing House properties where they no longer require support. The Plan states that the Mayor will 'Make Housing Moves available to people with a history of rough sleeping.'
- 4.5. Historically, small numbers have moved into social housing, given the limited supply of property and ability to register on local lists. Working with Clearing House and the G15 group of landlords, the Housing Moves scheme provides a dedicated pathway for them to register and bid for properties.
- 4.6. The Mayor's Rough Sleeping Accommodation programme approved under MD2687 also includes a commitment to improve opportunities to move on to long-term accommodation which the Clearing House priority pathway also supports.
- 4.7. The proposal is also in line with:
 - the Mayor's Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy
 - the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) Police and Crime Plan 2017-21
 - MOPAC's Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy.
- 4.8. New versions of the Police and Crime Plan and the VAWG Strategy are currently being developed.

Conflicts of interest

- 4.9. There are no known conflicts of interest for those involved in the drafting or clearance of this report.

Impact assessments and consultation

- 4.10. The boroughs and G15 have been consulted about the proposed changes to the scheme
- 4.11. As stated above, an equalities impact assessment has been undertaken to assess the impact of the proposed changes to Housing Moves.

5. Financial comments

- 5.1. This decision requests approval for revenue expenditure of up to £35,000 for the next 12 months, as detailed in paragraph 1.6, for an extension of the current IT hosting and support contract for one year, from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023 (the current contract extension, approved by DD2521 for £44,000, ends on 31 March 2022).
- 5.2. The above expenditure will be funded from external mobility scheme income.
- 5.3. Funding in future years will be subject to the annual budget-setting process.

6. Legal comments

- 6.1. The foregoing sections of this report indicate that the decisions fall within the statutory powers of the Authority to promote and/or to do anything that is facilitative of, or conducive or incidental to, social development within Greater London; and in formulating the proposals in respect of which a decision is sought, officers have complied with the Authority's related statutory duties to:
 - pay due regard to the principle that there should be equality of opportunity for all people

- consider how the proposals will promote the improvement of health of persons, health inequalities between persons and to contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development in the United Kingdom
- consult with appropriate bodies.

- 6.2. In taking the decisions requested, the Mayor and the GLA must have due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty; namely the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010; to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (race, disability, gender, age, sex, sexual orientation, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity, and gender reassignment) and persons who do not share it; and to foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010). To this end, the Mayor should have particular regard to section 3 (above) of this report.
- 6.3. As set out in paragraph 1.6 above, the Authority procured the contract with Probrand Ltd via a call off contract. In February 2021, Authority was provided by DD2521 for the exercise of an option to extend Probrand Ltd's contract by 12 months. The second decision in this decision form seeks the approval of the exercise of an option to extend the Authority's existing contract with Probrand Ltd for a further 12 months. To that end, regulation 72(1)(a) of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 provides that a contract may be modified during its term if the modification, irrespective of its monetary value, has been provided for in the initial procurement documents in clear precise and unequivocal review clauses provided that such clauses (i) state the scope and nature of the modifications or options as well as the conditions under which they may be used; and (ii) do not alter the overall nature of the contract. The officers have set out at paragraphs 1.6, 1.7 and 1.8 how the exercise of the option for a further extension of 12 months complies with these requirements.

7. Planned delivery approach and next steps

Activity	Timeline
Extension of existing contract commences	1 April 2022
IT and administrative changes put in place for the refocused scheme	By 31 May 2022
Refocused scheme commences	1 June 2022
Procurement commences for future IT hosting and support (subject to further approval)	1 July 2022
Contract extension terminates	31 March 2023

Appendices and supporting papers:

None.

Public access to information

Information in this form (Part 1) is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FoIA) and will be made available on the GLA website within one working day of approval.

If immediate publication risks compromising the implementation of the decision (for example, to complete a procurement process), it can be deferred until a specific date. Deferral periods should be kept to the shortest length strictly necessary. **Note:** This form (Part 1) will either be published within one working day after it has been approved or on the defer date.

Part 1 - Deferral**Is the publication of Part 1 of this approval to be deferred? YES**

If YES, for what reason: The MD should be deferred until all existing Housing Moves applicants who will become ineligible for the scheme as a result of the changes have been notified.

Until what date: four weeks from the date the MD is signed.

Part 2 - Sensitive information

Only the facts or advice that would be exempt from disclosure under the FoIA should be included in the separate Part 2 form, together with the legal rationale for non-publication.

Is there a part 2 form - NO**ORIGINATING OFFICER DECLARATION:**

Drafting officer to
confirm the
following (✓)

Drafting officer:

Colin Gipp has drafted this report in accordance with GLA procedures and confirms the following:

✓

Sponsoring Director:

Rickardo Hyatt has reviewed the request and is satisfied it is correct and consistent with the Mayor's plans and priorities.

✓

Mayoral Adviser:

Tom Copley has been consulted about the proposal and agrees the recommendations.

✓

Advice:

The Finance and Legal teams have commented on this proposal.

✓

Corporate Investment Board

This decision was agreed by the Corporate Investment Board on 28 February 2021.

✓

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, RESOURCES:

I confirm that financial and legal implications have been appropriately considered in the preparation of this report.

Signature

Date

D. Gove

1/3/22

CHIEF OF STAFF:

I am satisfied that this is an appropriate request to be submitted to the Mayor

Signature

Date

D. Bellamy

28/2/22

