



**Belfast City Council**

<b>Report to</b>	Strategic Policy & Resources committee
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>NIHE Benefit – Server Requirements</b>
<b>Date:</b>	19th June, 2014
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Ronan Cregan, Director of Finance & Resources, ext 6184
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Paul Gribben, Head of Digital Services, ext 4237

<b>1</b>	<b>Relevant Background Information</b>
1.1	Digital Services delivers hosting, managed application and software development services to the NIHE supporting payment of Housing Benefit, Rate Relief and Lone Pensioner Allowances to claimants across the region. The annual income for delivering these services is approximately £1.7 million.
1.2	In providing these services we aim to ensure the timely payment of over £650 million to over 160,000 claimants annually. Given the current economic circumstances both the amounts being paid and the number of claimants requiring these benefits are increasing each month, putting an additional strain on the infrastructure that is required to support the IT systems and increasing the risk of damage to the Council's reputation if services were not provided.
1.3	In order to protect the income generated by Digital Services (£1.7 M) and the IT services it delivers to the NIHE, a refresh of infrastructure is required to ensure that service quality is maintained.

<b>2</b>	<b>Key Issues</b>
2.1	In order to cater for legislative changes affecting Housing Benefit a new version of the Housing Benefit software (provided by Northgate) was implemented 6 months ago. The resultant software upgrade has had a negative effect on system performance to such an extent that the servers that support the Housing Benefits system are performing at their limits.

2.2	The NIHE is also indicating that they require an additional training environment to be ready for September 2014. Currently there is not enough server capacity to support this additional requirement.
2.3	Digital Services are recommending that an investment in ICT infrastructure is made to support the on-going requirements of the Housing Benefits system and to provide capacity to support anticipated future enhancements.
2.4	Whilst there is some uncertainty regarding the long term role of the Housing Executive and the impact of Universal Credit it is expected that the Housing Benefits service will continue to be carried out for at least the next 3 years covering the lifespan of the proposed server upgrade.

<b>3</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
3.1	<p>Digital Services are proposing the following infrastructure enhancements:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Replace the current server and storage environment with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>Capital Costs</u></li> <li>Oracle's SPARC T5-2 server &amp; storage - <b>£90,000</b></li> <li><u>Revenue Costs</u></li> <li>Annual support and maintenance - <b>£20,000</b></li> <li>Oracle database and application licensing - <b>£12,000</b> (To cover an additional processor)</li> </ul> </li> <li>Use the current live server and storage environment to support disaster recovery, test and training to take as much workload from the live environment as possible.</li> </ol>
3.2	The NIHE has agreed to make a contribution to the costs of providing an improved server environment. They have agreed to pay <b>£45,000</b> towards capital costs and Digital Services will increase the current payment terms between BCC and the NIHE by <b>£32,000</b> to fully meet the increase in revenue costs.

<b>4</b>	<b>Equality and Good Relations Implications</b>
	N/A

<b>5</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
5.1	The Committee is requested to authorise the procurement of a new server and storage environment to meet the hosting requirements of delivering the Housing Benefits system for the next 3 years.

<b>8</b>	<b>Documents Attached</b>
	None