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**New housing register and advice system to be introduced in the Chichester District**

A new online housing applications system, which will make applying to join Chichester District Council’s housing register quicker and easier, is set to launch this spring.

The new system, which is being introduced as part of service development improvements and in direct response to customer feedback, will also mean that residents on the housing list will be able to ‘bid’ for available properties that meet their needs much more frequently. This will increase the opportunity for people to find a suitable home.

The change will also make it quicker and simpler for people who need to contact the council to seek housing advice, or to access support if they are homeless or are facing homelessness.

The process of moving across to the new system will begin on Wednesday 19 March and is expected to be completed in May this year. During this time, the council will be unable to take new applications for the housing register, unless the resident has an urgent housing need. In this instance, there will be an e-form for people to complete on the council’s website: [**www.chichester.gov.uk/applyhousingregister**](http://www.chichester.gov.uk/applyhousingregister). Alternatively, if people are unable to complete the form online, they can contact the team by phone for advice on 01243 785166. This is a temporary measure while the council moves across to the new system.

Residents who are already on the council’s housing register will be contacted to ensure that their details and housing requirements are up to date. This will mean that any housing opportunities suggested to them in the future are tailored to their needs.

Those with an existing housing advice or homelessness application will be moved into the new system automatically and don’t need to take any action. They will be contacted with account details and information about how to use the new service when it is launched.

“We want to make it as easy as possible for people to contact our housing team for advice and support and the new system will further improve this,” says Councillor Oona Hickson, Cabinet Member for Housing, Revenues and Benefits at Chichester District Council. “We’ve listened to our customers and we believe that this new system will directly address feedback that we have received.

“While we’re upgrading to the new system, the way in which people access our housing services will look a little different, but we’d like to assure everyone that our team are available if they need support. The team are on hand to offer housing advice ([**www.chichester.gov.uk/housingadvice**](http://www.chichester.gov.uk/housingadvice)); to help those who are homeless or facing homelessness ([**www.chichester.gov.uk/helpwithhomelessness**](http://www.chichester.gov.uk/helpwithhomelessness)); and to take housing register applications from those with an urgent housing need ([**www.chichester.gov.uk/applyhousingregister**](http://www.chichester.gov.uk/applyhousingregister).)

“The new system, which we expect to be launched in May, offers a more personalised approach, making it easier for our customers to speak to our team about a new or existing application for our housing services.

“Not only will it make the process of applying for the housing register simpler, but it will also improve the way in which applicants can express their interest (or ‘bid’) on suitable properties. At the moment, we use Home Move to advertise and allocate available properties in the district to those on our housing list, however, this system can only be updated every fortnight. The new system, ‘Chichester Home Move’, will enable housing associations — known as Registered Providers — to add vacant homes as soon as they become available. This will mean that residents will have the opportunity to bid on a daily basis for a home that is suitable for their needs, and for which they are eligible.

“If you have a current housing application that is live, you will be able to continue to bid through the current Home Move system as you normally would, and we will contact you with advice about the new system.

“In addition, the new system will enable us to ensure that people’s details and requirements are kept up to date, increasing the chances of a customer being matched with a suitable property, especially if their situation has changed since they joined the register. It will also help us ensure that households with the highest level of housing need are prioritised.”

People can find a range of housing information and advice — from help finding affordable housing to buy or rent, to information on grants and discounts to help with housing costs — on the council’s Housing web pages: [**www.chichester.gov.uk/housing**](http://www.chichester.gov.uk/housing)**.**

The council also has a designated Supporting You team, who work with services across the council to help people access a range of assistance, including help with housing, financial help to pay bills, along with health and wellbeing support. People can find out more at: [**www.chichester.gov.uk/supportingyouteam**](http://www.chichester.gov.uk/supportingyouteam)

**ENDS**

**For further information, please contact Terri Foster, Senior Communications Officer, on 01243 534537 or by emailing** **tfoster@chichester.gov.uk**

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