

Finance & General Purposes Committee

Meeting Date: 18th February 2026

Report Author: Andrew Briggs

Subject: Booking Software Migration (Rialtas)

1. Purpose of the Report

To update Members on the challenges presented with the current Bookly booking system, and to seek approval to procure and implement the Rialtas Facilities Booking Management System from April 2026. The new system will integrate directly with the Council's finance software.

2. Background

In 2024/25 the Council transitioned its general booking system from Lemon Booking to Bookly, with the intention of creating a more streamlined and integrated online booking experience through the Council website (via WordPress plugin).

However, since implementation a number of operational challenges have arisen, namely:

- Discrepancies between bookings, invoices, and payments.
- No integration with the Council's accounting system (Rialtas).
- Heavy reliance on manual administration and spreadsheets.
- Difficulty reconciling historic bookings and chasing debtors.
- Risk of invoices being missed or duplicated.

Despite staff dedicating additional time to reconciliation work, the current system continues to present financial control risks and inefficiencies.

3. Current Issues and Risks

Financial Risk

- Bookings and invoices are tracked manually, increasing the risk of lost income.
- Future dated bookings cannot be entered into Rialtas without appearing as debtors prematurely.
- Chasing older invoices is proving difficult, with full recovery unlikely.

Governance and Audit Risk

- Manual processes reduce transparency and make auditing difficult.
- Inconsistencies create audit concerns.
- Reliance on spreadsheets introduces version control risks.

Operational Impact

- Staff time is being diverted from other work to resolve.
- Duplication of effort across systems.
- Increased likelihood of human error.

4. Proposed Solution

Officers propose purchasing the Rialtas Facilities Booking module, which integrates directly with the Council's Rialtas finance system.

Key features:

- Facilities booking software.
- Installation and configuration of facilities and resources.
- Bookings portal linked to the Council website.
- Calendar integration.
- Direct links to the Sales Ledger for automated invoicing.
- Staff Training
- Annual support and maintenance.
- Multi user licence (5 users).

This integration removes the need for parallel spreadsheets and manual reconciliation.

<https://rialtas.co.uk/facilities-booking-management/>

5. Implementation and Transition

Subject to approval, the transition will include:

- Software installation and setup.
- Structured staff training (7.5 hours).
- Creation of facilities, resources, and booking workflows.
- Portal integration with the Council website.
- Migration planning to ensure minimal disruption.
- Parallel running (if required) to validate processes.

A clear documented procedure will also be developed covering booking, invoicing, payments, and debt recovery to ensure consistent financial reconciliation.

6. Expected Benefits

Improved Financial Control
 Reduced Administrative Burden
 Better Reporting
 Stronger Governance and Safeguarding
 Better Customer Experience

7. Costs

The quotation to set up the Facilities Booking system is **£2,514.00** for Year 1

Breakdown:

One off cost:

- Facilities Bookings Software – £499.00
- Installation & Setup – £491.00
- Bookings Portal Setup – £86.00
- Calendar Integration – £65.00
- Training – £556.00

Annual support and maintenance (ongoing)

- Facilities Bookings (5 users) – £472.00
- Bookings Portal – £200.00
- Calendar Integration – £145.00

Support and maintenance charges apply annually from 1 April and are subject to a three year contract term.

7.1 Existing System Costs (Bookly)

The Council currently incurs relatively low direct costs for the Bookly booking system. The annual subscription is approximately £62.00, with an additional plugin renewal previously costing around £38.00 per year, bringing the total estimated annual cost to circa £100.00.

The plugin support has now expired and will not be renewed given the Council's intention to move to an alternative system. Subscriptions are understood to be nonrefundable; however, the Council can cancel at any time and retain access until the end of the paid subscription period.

While the financial cost of Bookly is modest, Members should note that the true operational cost is significantly higher due to the manual administration required, increased staff time with reconciliation work, and the potential risk of lost income.

Consequently, the proposed Rialtas system should be viewed as a calculated investment in financial control, governance, and efficiency rather than a like for like software cost comparison.

Confirmation is being sought as to whether any additional passthrough costs are payable via the Council's website provider. Any material updates will be reported to Members.

8. Budget Provision

It is proposed that the expenditure be allocated to:

Budget Code: 100/4245 – Subscriptions & Licences

9. Risk of Not Proceeding

Failure to implement an integrated solution may result in:

- Continued exposure to income loss.
- Ongoing audit risk.
- Increased staff workload.
- Inefficient financial management.
- Reduced organisational resilience.

10. Recommendation

Members are requested to:

Approve the purchase and implementation of the Rialtas Facilities Booking Software, including portal and calendar integration, with effect from April 2026, with costs allocated to budget code 100/4245 (Subscriptions & Licences).