

Case Study Leicester City Council

Driving efficiency and improving service delivery - Leicester City Council accelerates ahead with OPENHousing.

The background

Leicester City Council operates a decentralised housing service spanning 14 neighbourhood offices around the city. It manages a housing stock of over 23,000 and each office looks after two to four thousand tenancies.



Faced with recent Government efficiency agendas, in particular the Gershon Review, the council needed to develop innovative ways of reducing costs without compromising service delivery and quality. The council has also had to meet equality standards, which set out to ensure that all citizens have equal access to services.

In light of these targets, Leicester City Council needed to quickly understand and implement a plan to drive efficient and innovative ways of servicing the complex needs of its customers while keeping costs to a minimum.

The challenge

One of the biggest challenges for Leicester City Council was to reduce re-let and void turnaround times as improvements in these areas would quickly see extra rental income generation. In addition the council had to develop efficient ways of dealing with all enquiries spread over the 14 sites. For example, improving services to handle and monitor estate management issues such as noise and nuisance complaints.

Leicester City Council has been a long customer of IBS OPENSystems. Having already worked with IBS to provide and Average re-let times fall from 49 to 23 days achieving additional income in excess of £300,000 per annum support its Revenues, Benefits and Housing Management solutions. IBS has been a trusted partner.

Upon detailed consultation with IBS, it was clear that the council needed a long term approach. In order to develop a system which would support its ongoing and future needs IBS was the provider to help Leicester City Council. The biggest challenge was how the council went about achieving innovative efficiency gains without compromising service. As part of the consultation process, one of the original options was to investigate ways the council could further develop its existing OPENHousing system to build in ways of making processes more efficient.

The first step was to understand how calls were being taken, what services customers needed advice on, and how long it took to respond to customer's requests. Key business processes could be drawn out and a system tailored for the users to accurately collate the information. Reports could be extracted to analyse the type of call and its outcome. It was therefore important that the front end system was linked into the existing systems and processes.

David Taylor, Landlord services manager at Leicester City Council comments:

"IBS demonstrated the importance of us understanding and mapping our complex processes in order to build in workflow criteria and achieve the best solution for Leicester City Council. Only through taking this approach, could significant savings be achieved in the long term".

The solution

Although Leicester City Council had complex needs the biggest challenge was getting the buy in from the users at the 14 sites. Detailed business process mapping was coordinated with the users over the 14 sites. The council spent a lot of time securing user feedback through focus groups and giving internal project ownership to the staff. With detailed feedback, IBS pressed ahead with the challenge of designing and implementing a solution which fitted in with the business processes and the needs of the 14 sites. It was an important factor that the solution was flexible to accommodate Leicester City Council's changing requirements.

David Taylor, Landlord services manager comments: "We were confident that the time we needed to spend with IBS to provide consultancy on the project would pay off. It would have been easy to take a very short term approach and to ignore close consultation with the staff at each of the sites. In order to do this, we spent great time plotting the processes and understanding how we deal with every customer enquiry. From this, IBS could advise us on how we could build in efficient IT methods to improve our services and interaction with customers".

The benefits

The estate management and workflow system went live for one site in March 2005. It was then rolled out over the 14 offices over a three month period which was completed by the end of May. Before the implementation, performance on average re-let times was 49 days. Initially this fell to 34 days and since the introduction of estate management and workflow, times have further improved and are currently running at 23 days.

Every average re-let day is worth £13,000. So the additional rental income achieved equates to over £300,000 based on 2,000 lets. This has enabled Leicester City Council to improve the level of rental income collected, contributing to efficiency statements.

Another key benefit of the system has been the ability to understand complex processes and build in procedures to action outcomes through workflow. For example, the allocation and lettings process involved paper processes and the sending out of keys to or from the tenant or council. This often resulted in delays and losses of information and the keys. The estate management and workflow system from IBS has linked teams over the sites to automate processes and create actions once approved. In addition, a key benefit has been the ability to find out where the blocks are in the lettings process.

Since going live with IBS OPENHousing estate management and workflow, the system has logged 19,475 pieces of work. The system from IBS has improved quality in service and the council accurately logs and records work requirements.

The future

There are exciting plans for the estate management and workflow solution at Leicester City Council. The next stage of the project will involve establishing a single contact centre to handle in and outbound telephone calls into the individual sites.

A recent survey by the council, showed that customers have difficulty in accessing services over the telephone. So, the flexibility of the new system will allow Leicester City Council to provide one, well organised and managed customer services centre to handle calls. Part of the rationale has been the ability to build in automatic workflow processes to action call outcomes and integration into the back office system to bring up the relevant customer information.

David Taylor, Landlord Services Manager comments: "Going forward we are excited by the plans and opportunities we have to develop the system. We have made a good start in meeting government efficiency and diversity standards with IBS' help, but we feel we can improve these further. IBS has spent time to understand our complex needs and to provide us with viable options for the future. Working closely with our users and listening to our customer needs, we will continue to challenge the way we develop the system to further improve customer service".

OPENHousing, OPENContractor and OPENFinancials solutions, formerly from IBS OPENSystems, now belong to Capita Software Solutions.

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