Cheltenham Borough Council

Implementing an end-to-end digital approach to deliver savings and empower citizens

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Sanjay Mistry
Programme Manager
Cheltenham Borough Council

Challenge: Consolidating legacy systems for greater efficiency

Identifying efficiencies and looking for ways to work smarter are primary aims for most local authorities. For Cheltenham Borough Council, this was a key objective given staff were already being challenged by a number of disparate legacy systems and technologies, disjointed workflows and costly overheads.

As a result, the Council was keen to consolidate and transition from a siloed service approach to a single, end-to-end platform – one capable of encompassing a number of services and achieving more seamless, coordinated processes and experiences for both staff and citizens alike.

Solution: An integrated suite of services designed to save and streamline

As one of the first systems implemented by the Council, Idox's back office solution Uniform functions as a central data hub for several core service areas including Planning, Building Control, Environmental Health, Licensing, Estates Management and Land Charges. Powering all back office activity for close to two decades, the integrated and scalable modules are all enhanced by supporting technology including the Idox EDRMS and Enterprise for efficient document and workflow management, as well as a central gazetteer.

Sanjay Mistry, Programme Manager for Cheltenham Borough Council comments: "Our services were powered by a legacy approach and they were all disjointed – it wasn't ideal or cost effective. We were looking for a single platform that allowed us to rationalise and unify our technologies, that reduced our overheads and that avoided the need to purchase additional hardware."

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Continuing its relationship with Idox, Cheltenham has extended its back office software to include additional front-end services, providing the tools needed to coordinate operations while engaging with citizens in a more timely, efficient manner. Idox's Public Access has been deployed to automate publication of planning applications for general public viewing. A recent online forms project has also been implemented, offering citizen self-service while providing full integration with the back office to facilitate a truly end-to-end, unified service.

Outcomes: Improved engagement and reduced overheads

Idox's platform approach has enabled the Council to transform processes across a number of departments simultaneously, with minimal disruption. As well as delivering significant cost and time efficiencies through coordinated working, Idox's solutions have delivered benefits for citizens too, providing a 24/7 service even when the office is closed; "From the outside, the new technologies deliver a better end-to-end service for our customer base – they'll find they get their service faster and the end-to-end time will have been quicker", explains Sanjay.

"By moving to Public Access we can also empower customers to see how planning applications are progressing at their own convenience – previously we had no outward facing application to be able to do this. The feedback from customers has been very positive – it's all about empowerment for me and having self-service.

"The next stage from this was to allow people to make their own applications, so we have those systems in place and are now moving to our own online generic forms solution, powered by Idox. In this day and age, you shouldn't be waiting for the council offices to be open or telephone lines to become available. You should be able to do what you need to do at your own convenience."

Future: Empowering staff with mobile working

Cheltenham Borough Council is focused on large-scale transformation, with a number of programmes and projects constantly in progress for enhanced service delivery.

In addition to the Council's existing suite of Idox software and services, the team are looking to enhance their digital technology, rolling out Idox's tablet applications to enable staff to work on the move and drive productivity.

Sanjay comments: "We want to empower our officers to do more work in the field. They can provide up-to-date, dynamic information and anything they capture on site is available in the back office straight away via Idox's mobile apps. These are evolving aspirations for us and that's how we want to move forward for the next phase – if Idox carry on like they're doing, there's no reason why we wouldn't entertain any of their solutions."

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