

East Riding of Yorkshire Council

Reducing costs, improving services and increasing council and public engagement



Deliverables at-a-glance

- » Over 2.5 million documents migrated successfully to Idox EDRMS
- » 4,300 automated electronic planning consultation responses received in first seven months from initial Consultee Access user groups
- » 28 working days saved in the same period arising from online consultations
- » 91% of initial internal Consultee Access user responses now received electronically
- » 95% of Town and Parish Councils registered to consult online via Public Access
- » 80% of Town and Parish Councils who have so far been consulted using Consultee Access have submitted electronic consultation responses within the first four months

Challenge: Seeking digital solutions to automate information exchange and engagement

East Riding of Yorkshire Council (ERYC) provides services to a vast population of East Yorkshire, including the towns of Beverley, Bridlington and Goole. Covering an area of approximately 1000 square miles, it is one of the largest unitary councils in the country with over half of the population living in dispersed rural communities.

Having used a range of Idox solutions for a number of years, ERYC wanted to capitalise on the additional benefits available by updating their application portfolio to include a range of solutions specifically designed to save time, money and improve services.

Alongside Idox's land and property solutions (including Planning, Building Control and Land Charges) already in place, the Council implemented Public Access – a web-based solution designed to publish planning-related information to citizens.

Previously, Public Access was linked to a third-party document management solution. However, the level of integration with planning documents was limited and inefficient, leading to document publishing issues. The Council sought to undertake an improvement project, with one of the fundamental requirements being to increase the availability and accessibility of information to all interested parties. This required a simple-to-use, integrated system that was as relevant to regular planning consultees – such as an internal local authority department or the Environment Agency – as it was to ad-hoc consultees such as members of the public or the Town and Parish Councils.

It was also recognised that there was scope to increase the level of automation associated with information flow between the various systems in use within the authority. Facing reduced budgets and increased pressures on staff resources, the Council believed that automating a number of work areas, accompanied by the provision of relevant performance-related information, would increase efficiency and balance workloads across teams.



“Consultee Access has so far proven itself as a winner in terms of saving valuable service time, reducing duplication and manual processes. We have, in the very early stages of implementation, had 2,500 responses back via the Consultee Access System which, if it took five minutes previously to manually replicate the comments and publish them, equates to 28 full working days. Multiply this across the future rollout of the system and it is certainly looking encouraging.”

James Dodd
East Riding of Yorkshire Council
Project Service Lead for Consultee Access implementation



EAST RIDING
OF YORKSHIRE COUNCIL

Solution: Adopting automation to streamline internal processes and boost communication

The project involved a number of discussions between ERYC and Idox, including several web-based demonstrations to help identify how the various systems might interact in the manner required. ERYC also visited colleagues at North Kesteven Council to obtain an independent view of how the solutions had worked in practice elsewhere.

The decision was made to implement Idox EDRMS to improve the distribution and accessibility of documents. All documents were indexed so that they could be accessed by a range of systems in use at ERYC, and integration into Public Access provided a simpler way for the public to access information.

It was recognised that the implementation of Idox Consultee Access would deliver additional benefits such as improving the communication paths between all parties interested in the planning process, as well as automating the consultee consultation process.

Due to the nature of the ERYC area, it was important to share information as widely as possible, and to use the new capability as a means of increasing engagement with the wider rural community. As part of the rollout,

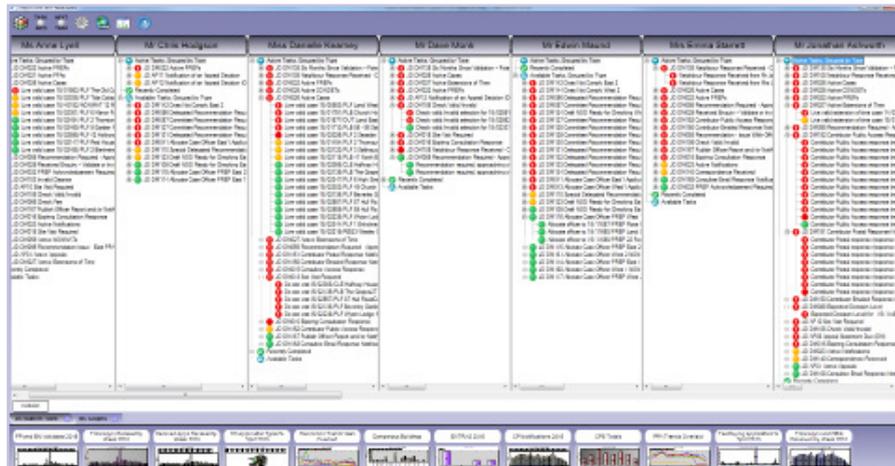
identifying that Town and Parish Councils have a key part to play in the planning process, a number of training sessions were organised on both the Consultee and Public Access platforms.

Alongside the data-driven solutions, Idox Enterprise would deliver a number of efficiency savings by automating several processes that required a significant level of manual intervention. This allowed team workloads to be effectively balanced and provided a level of transparency across the Council in respect to capacity and performance.

During the same period, a system known as Obligation Tracker was also implemented to monitor planning agreements. This ensured that the financial elements of each agreement were recorded, alongside the payment timescales due from developers. Notably, the solution guaranteed that all expected payments were received on time – something that had not previously been monitored effectively due to the use of several different recording systems across the different service areas.

Outcomes: Realising the benefits of system simplicity and integration

Selecting a suite of solutions that have the power to integrate and support the Council's front and back-end processes has brought several benefits.



Combining document management with public and consultee opinion and processing

Over 2.5 million documents have been migrated from the old electronic document management system to the Idox EDRMS, and indexed so that they are accessible by a range of systems in use at ERYC. Relevant documents are now available at the click of a button, including those used by council staff and those used by other interested parties such as citizens and elected members.

The integration of EDRMS into Public Access provides a simpler way in which the public is able to access information e.g. via a simple Documents Tab on the Public Access web application as opposed to multiple clicks into the old document storage location.

Comments submitted via Public Access or Consultee Access now populate in the correct expected locations under the Comments Tab on Public Access, and a document upload facility is available for Consultees to submit attachments when commenting on a planning application.

Simultaneously, there is now no need to run the overnight batch processes as required with the previous system. With Consultee Access, all processing is done in real time and Consultees can see their comments immediately online in Public Access without overnight delays.

It is estimated that time savings of approximately 28 working days have been saved in a six-month period, assuming that each consultation

response would have taken five minutes on average to process. Previously, each consultation response would have been entered, scanned, indexed and published manually.

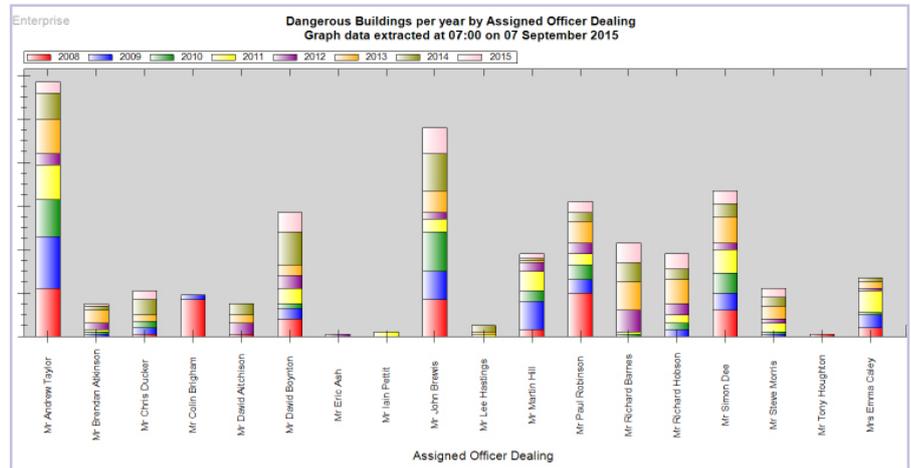
Supporting staff to streamline processes and achieve efficiencies

With the addition of Idox Enterprise, Council staff are seeing that many document related processes can be automated and are much easier to manage.

Workload reports have been built for each team and graphs produced displaying real-time information relating to the workload and performance across all service areas. As of today, ERYC has over 200 graphs representing various aspects of the service with the ability to “drill down” and enable individual records to be accessed.

Another key benefit relates to the new ways that income generation can be investigated. As Enterprise looks at all of the historic data available, it has enabled the tracking of trends from previous years relating to specific application types and services – subsequently enabling future trend predictions in respect to income generation.

The key to Enterprise is its simplicity – it enables a new manager or member of staff to quickly understand performance or current workloads in real time, based on site-specific criteria. At ERYC, it has helped improve both productivity and transparency and has also standardised the way of working.



Effectively tracking and monitoring Planning Agreements

Obligation Tracker is designed to ensure that all planning agreements e.g. Section 106 agreements and CIL (Community Infrastructure Levies) are recorded within a single system and accessible to all interested parties including finance and legal. As such agreements often last for a number of years, the system ensures that any relevant monetary payments are accounted for and any related non-financial obligations concerning developers and/or the Council, are monitored.

ERYC now has one system where all obligations/agreements are held centrally, with the system automatically producing relevant reminders, including linked Enterprise tasks.

For example, any planning application which has a legal agreement is entered into Obligation Tracker at the same time as the relevant Enterprise Tasks are triggered.

Future: Extending services to the cloud, mobile and new audiences

Although ERYC has implemented a number of systems aimed at improving efficiency, there are further developments still to progress.

Consultee Access is planned to be extended further by involving wider internal consultees including Public Protection, Licensing and Building Control divisions, before inviting external consultees such as Yorkshire Water, Humberside Police, Environment Agency and Historic England. The further the rollout of this system, the greater the expected time and resource savings are.

During the past few years, EYRC implemented most of their solutions within a thin client Citrix environment, where the Idox solutions fit very well. This has further increased productivity by allowing more officers to work from home and avoiding the need to visit the office particularly amongst Building Control inspectors.

Currently undergoing development are mobile solutions for a number of areas – not just Building Control but also Planning. Being able to undertake more work in the field will help improve work / life balance for staff and reduce the level of unnecessary re-keying of information.

ERYC is also considering the additional efficiencies which could be delivered by using the Idox Consultee Cloud, which provides a direct communication link between any Local Authority and the major consultees. The Council also plans to look more closely at iApply: the single portal for Planning, Building Control and Licensing applications and registers over the forthcoming months.

