



# Transformation that delivers real results

How Cheltenham innovated and improved digital with Idox

## Outcomes

- » Overall savings of **£93k** in less than a year
- » **100%** channel shift for the Council's taxi and private hire licensing function
- » **£40k** and **£15k** saved on consolidating legacy systems and reducing paperwork, respectively
- » Commercial activity increased by **£4-5k**
- » **156** public facing hours saved
- » End-to-end online customer journey times improved by **71%**

*Here, at the start of 2019, there's one thing local government knows for certain – digital transformation isn't going away. For Cheltenham Borough Council, undertaking a digital transformation initiative was the difference between struggling to keep pace during a time of changing technology and tightened purse strings, and £93k in savings.*

***How did the Council do it? This is their story...***

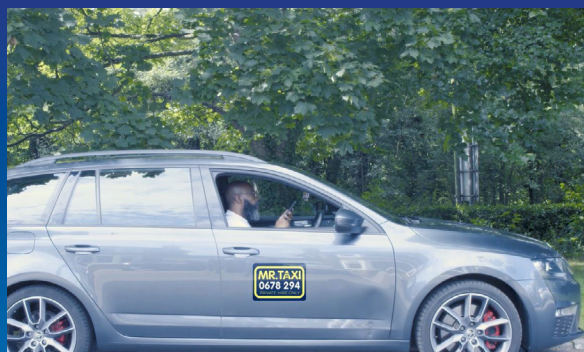
Like many local authorities, Cheltenham Borough Council is no stranger to the digital transformation journey – the authority is all too familiar with the need to reimagine roles and revolutionise key processes in a bid to work more efficiently and drive savings. But, with a number of previous siloed legacy systems and costly overheads in place, the project of change was no mean feat – how could they transition to a new way of working while maintaining business as usual and attempting to realise additional savings?

Armed with a long-term transformation plan, the Council has worked to empower its staff and citizens, generating overall savings of more than £90k in its Licensing domain alone in less than 12 months, and facilitating 100% channel shift – all supported by a partnership approach with supplier Idox. It's been a successful approach that other local authorities can certainly adopt, adapt and apply, and one that Cheltenham is keen to share.

## Simplifying to save

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. Enhanced by supporting technology including the Idox EDRMS, Idox Enterprise for efficient document and workflow management, and a central gazetteer, the Council's infrastructure was sound and poised to accommodate a fresh approach.

Aiming to work smarter while cutting costs, the Council has consolidated its software, coordinating disjointed workflows and transitioning from a siloed approach to a central, end-to-end digital platform – one capable of improving experiences for both staff and citizens and encompassing a number of services across the authority.



*“For taxi drivers, they can now sit in their car on a slow day and renew their licence, whereas before they would have had to make an appointment, come in to see an officer, sit down and do the paperwork, and then go off to make payment.”*

**Louis Krog**  
**Licensing Manager**  
**Cheltenham Borough Council**

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.

“The Idox solution offers something for all our services – it gives us alignment between departments and fewer overheads – less servers, less maintenance, less support required from our ICT services divisions, which has been a real benefit for us internally.”

## A licence to thrive

Having a solid infrastructure was just one piece of the jigsaw. The Council wanted to save more and transform further – and their licensing processes were first up and prime for channel shift. The aim was to develop an online self-service licensing platform to enable customers to submit and pay for licence applications 24/7.

“In this day and age, you shouldn't be waiting for the council offices to be open or telephone lines to become available,” Sanjay continues. “You should be able to do what you need to do at your own convenience.”

This vision was supported by Idox's suite of online forms, allowing citizens to apply for new licences at their convenience, while granting licence holders the ability to renew their licence online at any time.

In March 2018, the Council moved 100% of its taxi and private hire licensing function onto the new digital platform, removing many of the manual, labour-intensive activities associated with application submission management and processing, replaced by data automatically pushed into the back-end database and Idox EDRMS. The forms have transformed the entire process significantly, making it easier for taxi drivers to complete and pay for their licence online – avoiding the need for council office visits or unnecessary calls that can drain staff time and inconvenience citizens. Taxi licence applicants are subsequently left with a smooth and consistent online journey, providing service outcomes from start to finish, while the Licensing team benefits from an automated and integrated workflow, void of manual tasks.

Louis Krog, Licensing Manager at the Council adds: “It has enabled us to save an enormous amount of officer time in terms of administration and do away with a lot of rekeying and manual work – it's a secure way of communicating and one fluid process instead of several. It's good for customers and it's good for the Council.

“For taxi drivers, they can now sit in their car on a slow day and renew their licence, whereas before they would have had to make an appointment, come in to see an officer, sit down and do the paperwork, and then go off to make payment.”

Innovative and intuitive, the system is ready to accommodate other functions with alcohol licensing and trading licensing already transitioning across to the central digital platform.

## It's a numbers game

Cheltenham's transformation story is still an ongoing project – after all, digital transformation is an ever-moving target. But, figures indicate that initial investments have been solid ones.

The project outcomes are far exceeding original forecasts, with the team already reporting an overall saving of £93k, with £40k and £15k saved on consolidating legacy systems and reducing paperwork respectively.

And it doesn't end there. A total of 156 public facing hours have been saved through successful channel shift, with commercial activity having increased by £4-5k. End-to-end online customer journey times also improved by 71%.

Louis continues: “The forms have eliminated a huge amount of officer time that would have typically been spent processing and filing pieces of paper manually – it’s all automated now. Our officers can get on with the job of determining the applications rather than having to do the administration before getting to their day job.

“For citizens, they can do their applications and renewals anytime, from anywhere, as long as they have an internet connection – they can do it on their smart phone, their computer, laptop or their tablet. Idox’s back office software is also there to support the whole process – its robust, it works, it does what we need it to do and it’s scalable. Software add-ons such as Public Access and Consultee Access which feed into the system have also made it easier for our partners and residents to be able to better engage with the licensing process.”



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**Sanjay Mistry**  
**Programme Manager**  
**Cheltenham Borough Council**

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

In addition to transforming other service areas with the successful Licensing prototype, 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. As Sanjay notes: “We want to empower our officers to do more work in the field. These are evolving aspirations for us and that’s how we want to move forward for the next phase.”

## **A blueprint for success**

The Licensing team have been happy to speak to others about Cheltenham’s digital transformation work in this area, with Louis Krog having presented at the Institute of Licensing’s National Conference and the LGA’s Digital Showcase event in November 2018.

While this is Cheltenham’s own transformation story, it could be any authority’s – by investing in digital, being bold and choosing partners wisely, Cheltenham has demonstrated the potential of tech in driving savings, efficiency and productivity.

If you’re looking to the future and the smart adoption of digital technology – what you waiting for?

## **Interested in finding out more?**

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