Charnwood Borough Council
Using Unique Property Reference Numbers to drive management efficiency of council-owned property

"It's inspiring to see an LLPG Custodian identify and enable other departments within the council to use the identifier components of the LLPG to drive the efficiency and cohesion that you see here with Charnwood."

Dinesh Thanigasalam
Head of Sales for Address Data Solutions
Idox

Overview:
Realising efficiency and accuracy with council property management

For most local authorities, managing council-owned property is complex and time-consuming. There are likely to be multiple systems holding different types of information about the properties, all of which are required to give a full picture of each dwelling, garage or shop. Pulling all this data together in a format that allows the relevant teams to manage their tasks efficiently – chasing arrears, progressing maintenance or clearing fly-tipping hot spots – is challenging. This 360-degree view is also vital for customer-facing staff dealing with tenant queries and complaints. Charnwood Borough Council found that using the Unique Property Reference Numbers (UPRNs) to underpin addresses, and link the various banks of information to those addresses, was the most efficient and accurate way to do this.

Challenge:
Achieving as full a picture as possible of each council-owned property

Like many local authorities, Charnwood uses a housing database to manage its properties and a different system for its Customer Contact Centre – neither of which were using UPRNs as the address identifier. This made it problematic to pull together data to give a complete insight into a property.

Local Land and Property Gazetteer (LLPG) Custodian, Kevin Davies, recognised that the use of UPRNs and geo coordinates would significantly support the work of the Housing department and the Customer Contact Centre, enabling efficiencies to make their jobs easier and save time while providing better customer service. Working with the Heads of Rent Collections and Customer Contact Centre, Davies collated a wish list of requirements, identifying what data could be shared, and how it would be shared and maintained.

The aim was to provide as full a picture as possible of each council-owned property, underpinned by its UPRN to ensure one true address. This would guarantee that the information relevant to that address was accurate and, by using the geo coordinates displayable on a Geographic Information System (GIS), make it easy to understand and use. Providing a complete picture of the housing stock daily to the Housing department and Customer Contact Centre would enable greater efficiency and cohesion in the management of properties.

Charnwood was already using Idox's Aligned Assets LLPG gazetteer and its address matching solution to maintain the LLPG, so the challenge was to identify how these could be used to deliver the UPRNs and geo coordinates to the housing database and Customer Contact Centre system.

Solution:
Using address data to drive efficiency and cohesion across the council

Each dwelling, garage and shop owned by Charnwood has its own unique identifier on the housing database. Using the address matching solution, each of these was matched to the address data in the LLPG, and the unique housing identifier was imported to be used as a housing cross-reference. A UPRN field was added to the housing database so that when the address data was exported back, the field would auto-populate with the UPRN.

With the UPRN providing the address anchor, the full range of information could be pulled together to provide a picture relevant to the team or requirement. The first step towards this was to create two views – one in the LLPG, including the UPRN, geo coordinates and unique housing identifier (as a cross-reference), and a second in the housing database, including data required for managing the council's housing stock, such as tenure, void-status, type, occupancy, level of arrears, and maintenance.

The two views were used to create a separate indexed table containing the addresses in the BS7666 format, and the required data from the housing database. This is recreated daily, using a scheduled task, to account for any changes in the housing stock, such as sales through right-to-buy, amount of arrears, or the addition of new property.

The information in the indexed table is displayed through Charnwood's GIS application and made available to the Housing department and Customer Contact Centre. It groups the housing stock by the estate name that each officer is responsible for with each property position on the map, using the geo coordinates from the LLPG database. Each property is colour-coded on a field value, e.g. level of arrears or void-status.

Outcome:
Representing the data visually makes it easier to interrogate and improves efficiency for council teams

Housing officers can see a visual display of the area they cover, with properties themed on the area of interest they're currently working on. Hovering the cursor over a single address reveals the data about that property in a table, while hovering over the grouping polygon, displays the totals of the data on the properties it contains.

"Representing the data visually in this way," says Charnwood Borough Council's LLPG Custodian, Kevin Davies, "has not only made it much easier to digest and interrogate but also makes route planning for property visits more efficient, saving Housing officers lots of time."

Being browser-based, the GIS application can currently be viewed on any desktop or laptop. It can also be projected on a screen or printed as handouts, providing an easy-to-understand visual presentation of information at management or other corporate meetings.

The views in the LLPG and housing databases can be altered to contain any information held and used to create the indexed table to be displayed in the GIS application. If housing stock is sold or leased, this can be clearly identified in the LLPG, helping Customer Contact Centre operators to deal with calls relating to a property previously owned by Charnwood.

The LLPG is also used to update the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software used by the Customer Contact Centre and, together with the housing information presented through the GIS application, operators can easily retrieve information held on dwellings they own or had previously owned.

Charnwood is working on adding scheduled maintenance tasks to the housing database, which can also be viewed by Housing officers and management in the GIS application. The council is also looking at how it can better safeguard staff on property visits. For instance, if a tenant is on the Corporate Warning Register, these properties could be colour-coded, signalling the need for staff to visit in pairs.

Enabling all housing data to be pinned to the relevant UPRN and geo coordinate has enabled greater efficiency and cohesion for the council's teams. Housing officers and managers can readily interrogate data and respond more effectively to needs within their property portfolios.

Charnwood has also found it quicker to gather information about council-owned property, as well as ownership and/or maintenance of any property, land and street lighting in the vicinity. This data can be viewed as layers to assist Customer Contact Centre officers when dealing with complaints about street-lighting, fly-tipping, etc. "It's inspiring to see an LLPG Custodian identify and enable other departments within the council to use the identifier components of the LLPG to drive the efficiency and cohesion that you see here with Charnwood," says Dinesh Thanigasalam, Head of Sales for Address Data Solutions, Idox. "A great advocate for the benefits of the LLPG, Kevin Davies continues to seek other opportunities to use it for the greater good of the council."

Idox acquired Aligned Assets in 2021, bringing together the pioneering Aligned Assets solution with its own built environment software to offer the most accurate and comprehensive address data solutions on the market.

Call us now on 0333 011 1200 or email marketing@idoxgroup.com to find out more about Idox's Address Data Solutions.