



Cherwell District Council Reviewing the tangible benefits of its cloud-first strategy

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Rakesh Kumar
Spatial Services Manager
Cherwell District Council

Background:

Migrating to the cloud

In March 2023, we wrote a [case study about Cherwell District Council](#) and its drive to maximise efficiency and resilience through its cloud-first strategy. Twelve months on we met with Cherwell's Spatial Services Manager, Rakesh Kumar, to find out how the migration went and how well it has delivered against its initial objectives.

Solution:

Deploying a cloud-first strategy to drive efficiency and resilience

When we met in early 2023, Kumar shared six clearly defined goals to underpin Cherwell's cloud-first strategy. Based on the ability to meet these goals, Cherwell selected two of Idox's cloud-based solutions, **Idox Cloud** and Idox's hosted **iManage Gazetteer Management System (GMS)**.

The first step towards achieving Cherwell's cloud-first strategy was migrating the Local Land and Property Gazetteer (LLPG) to Idox's hosted iManage GMS. The second was the migration from Idox's Uniform to Idox Cloud for managing all its regulatory services, including environmental health, licensing, and private-sector housing business processes.

Idox worked with Cherwell to tailor the solutions to meet the Council's specific needs, including creating several bespoke LLPG database and spatial views in the iManage GMS. This allowed the Council to integrate seamlessly with its planning, building control and land charges case management software, along with the desktop GIS and web mapping applications.

Achieving the Council's ambitions:

With migration completed, Kumar has been able to review how well these goals have been met, and what any future developments might look like.

1) Reduced IT infrastructure and resource costs

Driven by the Council's cloud-first strategy, the IT infrastructure has moved to the Azure Cloud, and line-of-business applications have migrated to supplier-hosted cloud solutions.

This has made an immediate saving by significantly reducing the number of servers and resources required and has eliminated the need for other third-party licensing.

The hosted SQL-based iManage GMS has allowed the Council to use in-house skills and talent, making an immediate cost-saving by removing the need for external expertise or consultancy. Now, the disaster recovery environment and all updates, upgrades and patches are managed by Idox.



2) Streamlined workflows and business processes

Using both Idox Cloud and iManage GMS has significantly improved workflows and business processes. Idox Cloud's easy-to-follow workflows save time, making business processes straightforward and more efficient to manage, and its mobile app ensures consistency by enabling teams onsite to report and update in real-time.

For the LLPG, Idox has custom-built numerous data/spatial views that provide detailed address information quickly with intuitive processes for property creation, editing and management. iManage GMS integrates seamlessly with Idox's Address Search APIs for fast, accurate address searches and the Ordnance Survey (OS) API for base mapping, eliminating the need to load OS data.

3) Improved data analysis

Since migrating to iManage GMS, the Council can access back-office LLPG tables quicker and easier, enabling complex, comprehensive data analysis that is efficient to produce and underpins informed decision-making.

One of the first key projects was to analyse the elections database to ensure addresses were allocated to the correct polling district. By matching the addresses in the elections database with the LLPG, they could map and colour-code the address points by the allocated polling district code. This analysis allowed the team to visualise the data and make any corrections, ensuring voters are allocated to the correct polling district.

Cherwell also minimised costs and wastage when it mailed its residents its annual satisfaction survey. By matching LLPG addresses to the council tax register, Cherwell mailed the survey form to occupied houses only, eliminating unnecessary postage costs, increasing return rates and reducing wasted effort.

4) Increased resilience and security

Idox's cloud-hosted systems have enabled Cherwell to release resource and reduce risk as the applications and data are managed by Idox. This ensures that only the most up-to-date versions are accessed and deployed, increasing resilience and consistency.

5) Enable remote access to systems

With the continued trend for hybrid working, migrating to the cloud was the most efficient option to enable access from anywhere. Secure and resilient, the Council's systems can be used by those working in remote locations, enabling teams to access mobile apps out in the field and ensuring real-time updates across all systems.

6) Make the Council more accessible to residents and local businesses

Access for residents and businesses via the Council's online forms has become easier as all addresses are verified by the LLPG via Idox's integrated hosted iManage GMS. This has enabled faster processing of issues and applications such as reporting fly-tipping incidents or applying for business grants.

Outcomes:

Improved efficiency, resilience and interconnectivity

With the cloud-first strategy firmly in place, Cherwell is already benefitting from increased efficiency and resilience. With the address data adhering to British Standard 7666, the Council can use the Unique Property Reference Numbers (UPRN) to verify and link addresses in other datasets. For example, Cherwell has been using UPRNs to enable other business systems to view property history information that links to a specific address, providing a single version of the truth.

This ability to link multiple datasets has furthered the Council's digital transformation by enabling greater insights into locations and communities to help it deliver essential services more effectively.

While Cherwell is currently using Idox's hosted iManage GMS, it intends to migrate to the fully web-based version, iManage Cloud, once it launches in spring. Its user-friendly interface is even easier to use, with its intuitive wizard-driven processes and templates simplifying property and street creation, address validation and multi-edits. With APIs to integrate with Idox Cloud and Idox's Address Search capability, this integrated solution will maximise efficiency and interconnectivity.

Kumar concludes, "Now we are in the cloud, we are already benefitting from reduced IT infrastructure and maintenance costs, and greatly improved disaster recovery resilience. Once the web-based iManage Cloud has been released, we will migrate from our hosted GMS to the fully cloud-based version, to further drive efficiencies and interoperability. With these cost savings and greater insights into the communities we serve, we can work smarter to deliver improved services for our residents."

Call us now on 0333 011 1200 or email marketing@idoxgroup.com to find out more about our iManage Cloud GMS for the LLPG and LSG.

Idox Software Ltd
Unit 5, Woking 8
Forsyth Road, Woking
Surrey GU21 5SB

T: +44 (0) 333 011 1200
E: marketing@idoxgroup.com

www.idoxgroup.com