

Case Study - Electronic Services Delivery

In 2002 Dartford Borough Council was looking at how to meet the challenges of e-government and address Best Value Review recommendations to improve service delivery.

The vision for e-government was built around customer needs and the delivery of integrated, responsive and high quality services by a variety of methods - over the counter, by telephone, Internet or other electronic means.

Residents and businesses wanted to be able to access information and services quickly via a single point of contact. They wanted direct access to help without having to tell the same story many times. Over three quarters said they preferred to contact the Council and other agencies by telephone or in person.

A Best Value Review of services affecting the Street Scene identified a need to improve the way people could log and track calls about services.

Housing Services were also carrying out a Best Value Review and recognised that the further use of IT could greatly improve their services.

Electronic solutions were being investigated to address these and many other needs. One of the most innovative and successful was BRICS (Building Regulation Information Control System). This document control package was developed by Dartford Borough Council to improve its service to developers at Bluewater. Design drawings were submitted electronically via a networked computer system for review by Building Control Officers.

The system was entered for an Excellence in Local Government IT award and generated much media interest. It has since been sold to a software house and has led to wider use of document management within the Council.

To meet the need for a single contact system a decision was taken to develop a comprehensive Customer Contact Centre (CCC) for Dartford Borough Council. It will make payment of bills, reporting of repairs and complaints and requests for services much easier for residents and businesses in the Borough. They will still have a choice of how they contact the Council, either in person, by email or on the telephone.

For resource reasons the project is being phased but ultimately will encompass all services across the Council. Housing was considered most suitable for the first phase. The second phase will address Street Scenes services.

Dartford has worked with Capita to implement the Capita Direct suite of programs providing:-

- systems that deal with customers/callers - usually referred to as customer relationship management (CRM) systems, are used to improve the way calls are dealt with
- controlled access to personal information through secure personal identification numbers (PINs)
- interaction with some of the Council's back office systems to improve efficiency of services

Capita Direct went live in June 2003 and provides a simple, convenient, round the clock way for tenants to log requests for housing repairs and to monitor the progress of that request.

Facilities for rent account enquiries and requests for new rent cards were launched in September.

These new systems, developed with Capita, offer better ways of delivering services to our customers while meeting government targets.