



“Objective EDRMS underpins our policy to optimise the use of information within the Housing Directorate to **increase customer responsiveness** and **facilitate new ways of working**.”

Barbara Brownlee Director of Housing, Thurrock Council

ORGANISATION

Thurrock Council

INDUSTRY

Local Authority

SOLUTION

 **Objective ECM**

BENEFITS AT A GLANCE

- **50% reduction** in administrative staff and associated cost savings through the automation of admin-intensive processes
- **80% reduction** in the volume of paper held and associated cost savings
- **Improved customer service** through timely and accurate tenant correspondence
- **Streamlined business processes** including tenant correspondence and housing management through intuitive workflow

Information as the foundation of transformation

Thurrock Council is a unitary Council in Essex, England, providing public services to around 158,000 residents of the main town of Grays and surrounding areas. Following a housing stock options appraisal in 2005 the Council opted to retain its social housing stock, and it currently owns and manages around 10,200 rented properties across the area.

With increasing pressure to make services more citizen-centric and to enhance operational efficiencies, Thurrock, like most local authorities is undergoing a period of transformation. The Council's Corporate Plan 2013-2016 sets out an ambitious plan to transform services to be more efficient, including 'invest to save' projects to bring further improvements in the medium term.

The Corporate Plan states 'While ambitions remain high for the next three years, local government is facing a period of significant change, driven by budget cuts and rising demand for services. The Council will need to develop new ways of working and service delivery models to remain viable.'

TRANSFORMATION IN HOUSING

The Council's Housing Service was one of the first to adopt this 'invest to save' approach, and during 2013 embarked on a transformation programme which required the closure of area offices, streamlining of administrative support, automation of admin-intensive business processes, reduction of existing paper stores and a move towards a 'born digital' culture to drive cost savings and improve process efficiencies and customer service.

To drive the programme, the Service had to overcome a number of challenges. Alistair Sharpe-Neal, Housing Transformation Manager at Thurrock explains: "One of our primary challenges was our inconsistent approach to customer care. With the lack of a council-wide information management strategy and no integration across our core housing systems, we operated a multitude of disjointed paper-based processes which meant trying to find the right information to provide a timely and accurate response to tenant enquiries was often difficult."

KEY METRICS



VOLUME OF
PAPER
HELD DOWN

Without an effective information management system, Managers were unable to review and streamline many of their document-centric business processes, such as correspondence, housing management activity, tenancy enforcement and planned and responsive repairs to drive the proposed efficiency savings.

SHIFTING THE PAPERWORK

The Council, working in partnership with Serco (their IT services provider), initially implemented the Objective 'Electronic Document and Records Management' System (EDRM) solution in Housing Services as a consolidated 'electronic filing cabinet' – providing secure, searchable access to Housing information.

The solution, which went live within **12 weeks**, has now been rolled out across the Directorate to manage both structured and unstructured information, centralising key customer interactions such as property and tenancy documents, with an approved and consistent file plan based on the sector-standard Local Government Classification Scheme.

In addition to the EDRM software, Thurrock implemented complementary Information Management modules including Objective Discover, an intuitive search tool providing refinement options that help guide users towards highly relevant information which may have been hidden in simple search results.

Alistair explains "EDRMS coupled with a unified search experience offers the opportunity to search and find all relevant case information, correspondence, email and other records in one place."

With key Housing information accessible from a single repository, staff can now offer highly flexible responses to customer requests in a timely manner.

AUTOMATING PROCESSES

Integrated with scanning and workflow technology, Objective Workflow is used to track, route and automate end-to-end business processes resulting in substantial efficiency and effectiveness improvements to:

- Customer Service through the automatic handling, prioritising and allocation of a customer enquiry
- Control and audit of core tenancy documents within case files
- Resource allocation for housing repairs and improvements

To ensure that future information is 'born digital', Objective integrated EzeScan software to scan housing related files directly into Objective via multi-functional devices (scanning printers). Digital capture of paper documents at this early stage in the process significantly reduces process lead times arising from paper transfer, enabling housing documents to be quickly scanned, captured and classified into the EDRM system.

The EDRMS implementation is steadily reducing the departments administrative support requirements, enabling officers to 'do their own admin' through using the existing MFD network to capture and route documents and by capturing emails and saving documents directly into the repository. The automation of these previously admin intensive processes has contributed to a **50%** reduction in administrative Full Time Equivalents (FTEs) from **20 to 10**, with the opportunity for a further 3 FTE savings.



FACILITATING NEW WAYS OF WORKING

With the move from paper to digital, key interactions between council officers and residents are now undertaken electronically and seamlessly from any council location or direct from customer homes. Staff now have confidence that the information they need will be available to them whenever and wherever it is required. Sharpe-Neal comments “the focus on ‘digital by default’ has allowed for mobile working, without compromising the quality or accuracy of the service we provide.”

He continues “We have been able to close and re-let area offices, rationalised remaining offices into hot desks and free-up office and desk space, contributing to the reduction in the volume of paper held by **80%**.”

Implementing Objective EDRM has proved essential in enabling the Housing Service to deliver its transformation programme and has accelerated the move towards paperless working using scanning, electronic document templates and forms, enabling teams to reduce process times and provide quicker, more accurate, customer responses.

As part of the wider Housing transformation programme the project will help contribute to **£1.5 million** in operational savings over the next five years.

Barbara Brownlee, Director of Housing, at Thurrock Council explains: “Objective EDRMS underpins our policy to optimise the use of information within the Housing Directorate to increase customer responsiveness and facilitate new ways of working in line with the Council’s Digital Transformation, whilst making a significant contribution towards our revenue budget savings.”

With a successful implementation within Housing, Thurrock have taken the opportunity to build on the achievements to date and continue with a Corporate EDRMS deployment to deliver additional cost savings and process efficiencies through further business process automation via workflow and ‘Line of Business Integration’ with other key IT systems. The Objective solution will be rolled out across the entire council to over 1,250 users in a phased “by directorate” approach by the end of December 2015 alongside an Office Refurbishment and integrated business change programme.





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Alistair Sharpe-Neal
Housing Transformation Manager,
Thurrock Council



ABOUT OBJECTIVE CORPORATION

Objective Corporation (ASX:OCL) creates information and process governance solutions that are effortless to use and enable organisations to confidently advance their own digital transformation.

Designed for regulated industries, these solutions turn the imperative of compliance, accountability and governance into an opportunity to streamline business processes and deliver the innovative services that customers expect.

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With a heritage in Enterprise Content Management (ECM), Objective's expanded solutions extend governance across the spectrum of the modern workplace; underpinning information, processes and collaborative work-spaces.

Through a brilliant user experience, people access the information they need to progress processes from wherever they choose to work.

