

# ➔ Surrey Heath Borough Council roll-out Electronic Document Management System

A ten year document management journey at Surrey Heath Borough Council has resulted in easier access to information across multiple departments. Replacing paper driven processes with electronic ones has enabled substantial back office cost savings and improved the efficiency of frontline services. Significant storage space has been liberated at the Council's Camberley based offices; space now let to Surrey Police and the NHS to provide a much needed boost to council revenues.

## **An innovator for improved efficiency using technology**

Surrey Heath Borough Council is based in Camberley, Surrey. Over 80,000 people live within Surrey Heath, a 36.5 square mile area, renowned for its safe, green environment and recreational facilities.

The Council continually strives to find better ways of interacting with residents. Wherever possible, they utilise technology to provide staff with new and efficient ways of working, which improves engagement with residents, stakeholders and partners.

## **A document management journey**

The Council has been working with ProcessFlows to implement and develop a document management solution for well over 10 years, albeit in a very small way to start with, as a simple look-up tool for archived documents.

This gradually evolved into the installation of an OnBase solution to provide a firm foundation for an envisaged, future enterprise Document Management System which would standardise the way documents were processed, shared and stored across the entire organisation.

Opting for OnBase would also reduce the number of applications IT had to support and maintain and provide a single supplier point-of-contact for any technical queries and upgrades.

This experience of 'doing more with less' – initiated by their CEO has delivered significant cost savings and improved key frontline services.

To date, Surrey Heath has been able to successfully roll-out OnBase into seven departments, with three more already on the list for 2014.

## **It started with saving storage space and improving document retrieval – no document management server was required.**

Archived paper documents were stored in filing cabinets which were taking up a huge amount of office space. Downsizing was long overdue.

Documents in varying formats were scanned into electronic images by a third-party bureau and indexed/stored on a CD or DVD, using an OpenText Alchemy Pro software license, to provide an electronic filing cabinet of archived documents.

A free, read-only version of Alchemy embedded in the CD/DVD enabled staff

to browse and view the documents from their desktop.

The original paper documents were then destroyed in line with compliance regulations and storage space was freed-up. Office space could be returned to more productive use.

## **An Alchemy document management server and integration with GIS followed**

James Rutter, GIS Manager at Surrey Heath was keen to:

- Streamline the verification of Planning History Cards against grid reference sites for Planning Control, which was at the time a very laborious and time consuming task.
- Minimise the fire and flood risk for important, paper-based planning records.

Each planning application dealt with by the department has to be checked against information contained in the planning history card/s - an archive going back 40 years – and then matched with the Ordnance Survey grid reference for that plot/site.



The process involved staff having to initially locate the correct planning application reference site 'dot' on the OS map using a manual plotting sheet before they could retrieve any related planning history cards from filing, which was at the time located in the office basement. They then had to make sure that history cards were returned to the correct place when they had finished with them.

Having the historic planning records (history card(s) in electronic format would make it much easier and quicker to cross-check the information, as it could be achieved from the desktop.

ProcessFlows supplied Surrey Heath with an Alchemy document management server solution to electronically store the history card information and integrated Alchemy with Surrey Heath's GIS.

In order to achieve total synergy/cross referencing between the history cards stored in Alchemy and the maps contained in the GIS, information had to be scanned into the relevant systems and uniquely referenced to ensure accurate results:

- Ordnance Survey maps were scanned and loaded into the GIS system.
- As maps were scanned, the 'dots', relating to the northern and eastern grid reference, were recreated as vector data - allowing the unique reference to be digitally embedded.
- Planning history cards were scanned and indexed to the same N & E coordinates as the 'dots' in the GIS system and imported into the Alchemy repository. They were also given a unique 8 digit grid reference and an address field added to facilitate ad-hoc look up.

Planning Officers could access the history cards stored in Alchemy from their familiar GIS interface. They needed to click on the location on the map to retrieve all the documents stored in Alchemy associated with that 'dot'.

Successful completion of this project saved planners a lot of time and liberated more storage space.

Members of the public were able to view the history cards themselves from computers located in the reception area of Surrey Heath's offices.

James Rutter was able to further maximise their Alchemy investment; Archived-to-CD databases from other departments were uploaded into the Alchemy repository. This provided quick access to archived material, improved management and control of the data and enhanced security.

Alchemy also solved the fire and flood risk problem and it also acted as a disaster recovery system, with back-ups on CDs stored off-site.

#### **A switch from Alchemy to OnBase**

Surrey Heath's ongoing aim to improve document records management and make information more freely available throughout the whole organisation meant that they eventually outgrew Alchemy.

Matt Lindsay, Applications Support Officer, is responsible for driving Surrey Heath's document management journey towards a single Electronic Content Management (ECM) solution for the entire organisation.

*"Alchemy is primarily an enormous, electronic filing cabinet. It's great for securely storing silos of documents so they can easily be found, but we wanted a lot more than that. Ultimately, all unstructured data entering the*

*organisation will be automatically captured and moved via workflow to the right person. All our users will be able to store, locate, view, edit or print documents, no matter where those documents are located."*

An internal review on electronic document and records management was undertaken. How to handle unstructured data/information, compliance, freedom of information and data protection issues, making information available over the web and security were all discussed.

#### **The future is OnBase**

The result is that Surrey Heath selected OnBase as its future ECM solution.

Matt said; *"OnBase is the only solution available that fitted our criteria for functionality, scalability and budget. It enables us to control the way information moves around the organisation, rather than it controlling us and empowers us to positively demonstrate good governance."*

*"OnBase is a line system that can handle all our day-to-day information assets. It provides us with a robust foundation which will not have to be discarded when our line-of-business applications are eventually upgraded or discarded. It totally fits our current and future strategy to utilise and build, in a modular way, on our existing infrastructure as demand from departments grows and budgets allow."*

OnBase is easily integrated to provide a seamless back-end for existing applications (such as the GIS used by Planning Control as well as Outlook and MS Office) and/or as a front-end for business process and workflow to deliver immediate content management benefits.





- The initial OnBase integration was with the GIS. Information held within the Alchemy repository was imported, functionality and content were replicated.
- OnBase was then integrated with Surrey Heath's fleet of Canon MFDs – further reducing their dependency on paper.
- All departments previously using Alchemy for document retrieval and look-up now use OnBase.

#### Building team by team

Other departments soon realised that that colleagues working with the new document management system were much more productive and efficient. Staff have therefore been very supportive of Matt's OnBase adoption plans and he's had little resistance. Departments have been keen to take ownership and manage their own scanning, workflow, etc.

The appointment of a new Records Manager, to put compliant data protection and FOI policies in place, is a clear indication of the ongoing commitment by Surrey Heath to run an efficient operation and deliver better services to the community.

#### Land Charges

Land Charge Register data was next. All land charge documentation, which has to be held for a minimum 6 years, was stored in paper format in the basement.

Using the OnBase Application Enabler – a custom-build integration tool that facilitates seamless integration with business applications - OnBase was integrated with Acolaid, which holds the Land Searches.

Surrey Heath used the 'print barcode

cover-sheets' function within Application Enabler to facilitate the automatic linking of all scanned documents with the data held in Acolaid. Indexing bar codes were generated and applied to all paper documents prior to scanning into OnBase. As they were scanned, information was associated and documents were able to be indexed with complete accuracy.

#### Licensing

Processing licensing applications and reinforcement documentation for hackney carriage & private taxi hire, street collection, gambling, liquor and animal premises licenses, generates a lot of paperwork. Each team member was spending around 15 hours of their working week just filing and retrieving documents.

OnBase's AutoFill keyword sets were added at this stage to standardise and automate the data entry and indexing process. AutoFill keyword sets enable the auto-population of up to 10 indexing data fields, saving users keying-in time.

#### How it works:

- A primary key word field and associated fields are chosen.
- Licensing's primary key field is case number. Associated key fields are name, business, address, case type etc.
- Each new licensing document is referenced on case number and input in the line of business system.
- The document is automatically routed to an OnBase index queue located on the network.
- Every 3 minutes OnBase picks up the documents.

- Utilising keysets, it searches integrated applications for the preset keyword field (the license case number in this instance) and once verified, automatically pulls through name, address etc and populates the key index fields identified, completing the indexing process.

Each team member now spends just under three and a half hours a week on document search and retrieval, freeing up over 11 working hours a week per person which can be used for much more productive tasks. Time saved equates to an annual cost saving of £19,500.

#### Environmental & Housing

Now fully comfortable with OnBase, assured of their in-house technical expertise and appreciating the return a successful document management implementation creates, Surrey Heath expanded OnBase into the busy, paper laden Environmental and Housing departments. This move accrued them another £13,000 of annual savings.

#### Planning, Revenues & Benefits, Information Governance and Corporate Property

New tools were introduced to improve efficiency, workflow and compliance - automated redaction, document conversion and document composition. Support for the existing IDOX planning system and Formscape was due to be ended, so information from these applications was transferred into OnBase - 130,000 documents from the IDOX system were migrated into OnBase with all their associated indexing information.



### The OnBase Redaction module

Automated Redaction was set-up to electronically obscure and thereby secure, sensitive information (such as personal telephone number and email address) on documents available for viewing by members of the public on public access portals.

Up to this point, in Planning, sensitive information was manually 'blacked-out' and was the responsibility of two members of staff. It was not unusual for this task to take 2 weeks to turn around, per case.

If they were out of the office, no redaction took place and longer delays resulted. Now, all six staff in the Planning Admin team can complete this task in an hour using OnBase, with the added security that there is no risk whatsoever to sensitive data.

Other benefits include a much quicker scanning process; a real positive when scanning representation letters running into multiple pages. They can be batch scanned with the same indexing using batch separation sheets, saving even more time.

It's all progressing towards that paperless office goal. Case officers are being issued with iPads; making it much easier for them to access information stored within OnBase from any location.

### Document Conversion

Document conversion makes it possible to reduce the size of large PDF documents for viewing online without the need of installing special software; increasing the self-service possibilities that can be presented to constituents.

### The OnBase Statement Composition module

Previously, Formscape was used by

Surrey Heath to create all Revenues and Benefits forms, including Giro cheques.

To replace Formscape, Surrey Heath were able to utilise the document composition and distribution capability of OnBase to automate bill and notice production; immediately improving their incumbent process and taking efficiency a step further.

Prior to OnBase, staff wanting to run letters and forms and retrieve historic copies, relied on IT to retrieve the data files for them from a UNIX server. Having recovered the files, IT then had to manipulate the data so that only specific records could be viewed. As bill templates change from year to year, the identified data file then had to be matched with the correct template before bills could be reprinted.

#### Now:

- No more intervention from IT staff to run letters and retrieve historic copies.

- Service area users are now self-sufficient as they can retrieve bills and notices themselves.

Product replacement saved a further £12,849.75 of budget.

### Forthcoming projects

- HR, Legal and Family Support OnBase is scheduled for roll-out in HR, Legal and Family Support. To make it even simpler for staff to access documents, Unity Client, OnBase's primary software interface, will be introduced.

Unity Client provides users with the familiar look-and-feel of Microsoft Office; making it easy for them to use with little or no training.

### Business as usual

It is hard to control costs in a tough

economic climate with reduced investment returns and income, but introducing business process automation – which can take up the slack when staff numbers are reduced and back office operational costs have to be cut – means it can be business as usual.

ProcessFlows' and Surrey Heath's work with OnBase has improved the quality of the working day for staff. They no longer waste time locating information - It's easy to find in OnBase, enabling them to quickly respond to queries. As a result, job satisfaction and morale is higher, in spite of having a greater workload.

From a management perspective, OnBase provides greater control and visibility, providing all the tools needed to collate information for reporting, auditing and business planning.

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**"With a reliable and robust document management system in place, you'll quickly discover that employees feel much more productive, as they no longer need to spend time on the mundane and frustrating task of searching for documents. Stakeholders approve because the operation is more productive and less costly, enabling them to get closer to the saving targets set by the government."**

Matt Lindsay,  
Applications Support Officer, Surrey Heath Borough Council

### Profits from 'space'

At Surrey Heath, the outgoing cost of physical document storage, which equates to 80+ square metres of space so far, has been turned into a profit as the space is now generating a rental income of up to £10,250 a year from third party organisations.