

Aylesbury district council

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Company: Software AG Customer: Aylesbury District Council Submitted by: MCC International Date: June 2001 Aylesbury Vale District Council (AVDC), founded in 1973, employs 750 staff and serves 160, 000 residents across a predominantly rural area. It is in the top ten of UK councils for customer satisfaction. The Council had four main buildings in Aylesbury, where different services were administered. This often caused confusion for customers who frequently had to be redirected to a different building.

In 1999 AVDC decided that it wanted to put all its customer facing staff together and it commissioned the refurbishment of a town centre building to create a new customer service facility. The project began as an office move. It then developed rapidly into a mission to incorporate the highest levels of customer service into the culture of the Council. The main question was how best to process and answer customer queries. AVDC first wanted to concentrate on looking after customers who chose to visit the Council offices.

It envisaged a situation in which any member of the customer support team could confidently handle any query. The project team came up with the concept for a new IT system.” We went to tender, explaining our vision and asking for cost estimates” explains Robert Lavell, Head of IT Services. “ We also wanted an Intranet and this became part of the specification. As we did not fully understand our own requirements and at the same time were constrained by budgets, we knew that we would have to take an evolutionary approach.

We wanted to ensure that we had the potential to create a Call Centre and develop web services if and when they were required. As we went through

the tender process it became clear that a number of the applications available were too limiting.” In contrast to other suppliers who had suggested off-the-shelf applications with some customisation, Software AG proposed a generic e-Government architecture that had the flexibility to be used in different ways. This was to be a bespoke application based on Tamino, the XML platform, and Bolero, the Java based development environment. AVDC recognised that this would provide the flexibility required to meet e-Government standards (XML) and awarded the contract to Software AG in March 2000.

Taking an evolutionary approach

As Robert Lavell commented, “ Software AG’s ideas were not totally concrete.

We felt that there was scope to talk and develop the solution, changing the original specification if necessary. That was the key differentiator. With the Intranet in particular we were not exactly sure what we needed. Cost and flexibility were key concerns and we did not want to get stuck with an off-the-shelf solution. Software AG really focused on the customer service process. As a result we have a cornerstone for all future developments.

“ AVDC set out to create a comprehensive A-Z of services and then map a set of processes for a customer service operator (CSO) to follow. Software AG developed the technology to match the processes and indicate what questions an operator needed to ask a customer. This would lead to a definitive answer or indicate which department expert would be able to help. The intention was to make a generalist operator a specialist in a variety of

areas. The components of the system were defined by AVDC's project team. The first thing was the ability to front-end existing systems to allow access by CSOs.

AVDC did not however want to create potential confusion by allowing CSOs to enter data so they also needed to define a split between the front and back office systems. Budget restraints meant that it would not be possible to set up access to all systems and it was decided that the most important ones were council tax and housing. The Tamino platform is used to provide the integration.

A high street presence

AVDC's customer centre opened on 19 February 2001. The new system allows CSOs to log customer queries and identify ways to help customers without involving back office staff.

In the six week period from 19 February the ten members of staff in the centre handled 4, 836 enquiries, an average of 161 per day, 18 per hour. This represented a 57. 5% increase in enquiries." We found that the only issues we had to sort out were to do with the logistics of greeting and processing so many people. Implementation of the new system went smoothly and feedback from operators was extremely positive" reported Robert Lavell. " This is a cornerstone.

We can now deliver better services to our customers and support our staff more effectively in delivering those services. Although we did this before the e-Government initiative took off, what we are doing goes a long way towards meeting e-Government targets." The Intranet went live in May. AVDC sees <https://assignbuster.com/aylesbury-district-council/>

this as a vehicle that will enable it to focus more on knowledge management and the sharing of consistent, up to date information throughout the organisation.” We have a very good working relationship with Software AG” concludes Robert Lavell, “ and through this project we have come to understand the potential of Tamino and Bolero. The project team is now looking at what we can do with the products.

Tamino stores items in the database we have created in a particular way. We will be able to bolt on existing applications and also develop further applications. As a development tool, Bolero is easy to use. Although we are not a specialist development department, we know that there are many things we can do ourselves.”