

Case Study

Dorset Software: driving transparency and accountability across government

Woking Borough Council



With an annual turnover of £100 million, Woking Borough Council is responsible for providing services to over 90,000 borough residents. As a public sector organisation, it has to deal with a diverse group of stakeholders.

Solution Snapshot

A bespoke Democratic Process Management application, tracking all subjects raised and their outcomes in corporate decision making. Utilised technologies include VB.NET, Microsoft SQL Server, Microsoft Active Directory and ISYS.

Key Benefits

- The solution helps to improve and monitor the decision-making process
- Performance against targets can be measured
- It enhances transparency for members, officers and the public
- Accountability is increased across the organisation
- The system enables the outcomes of decisions to be tracked
- The solution creates a framework for standard procedures

"Introducing Shikari has provided Woking Borough Council with a corporate tool which enables us to monitor and manage our business more effectively."

Ray Morgan, Chief Executive,
Woking Borough Council

The Challenge

With a wide range of committees making a vast array of decisions, Woking Borough Council had no visibility over the decisions made or the associated actions and tasks. The Council recognised that it needed a corporate tool that would help it to manage and track all subjects raised and their outcomes in the corporate decision making process, and to improve the transparency of the process for members, officers and the public.

The Borough also needed a reporting tool to monitor the decision-making process and to measure performance in implementing decisions.

The Solution

Based on the specification Woking selected Dorset Software to provide a bespoke Democratic Process Management application. It assists the Council to: create a framework for standard procedures; automate the decision making process; track subjects requiring decisions and those where actions are to be implemented; remind users of their actions and amalgamate and associate key decision plans, meeting agendas, minutes and actions. The completed system also includes a reporting tool to monitor the decision making process and the ability to measure performance in implementing decisions, plus seamless integration with the Council's intranet and public website.

The Benefits

The application delivers a host of benefits to Woking Borough Council: It improves overall governance arrangements; it helps to improve and monitor the decision-making process and it enhances the transparency of the decision-making process for Members, Officers and the public.

It also enables the outcomes of decisions to be tracked; increases accountability across the organisation and ensures that performance against targets can be measured. It also helps to streamline the decision making process, reducing the amount of user training required.

It allows the Council to see, at a glance, the status of all business.



DORSET SOFTWARE

The Challenge

Woking Borough Council wanted a software solution, which would help it to: create a framework for standard procedures; automate the decision making process; track subjects requiring decisions and those where actions are to be implemented; remind users of their actions; amalgamate and associate key decision plans, meeting agendas, minutes and actions. The Borough also needed a reporting tool to monitor the decision making process and the ability to measure performance in implementing decisions.

Woking Borough Council initially commissioned Dorset Software to undertake a comprehensive needs analysis to determine its unique requirements, suggest areas for improvement and to construct a solution specification. Research was undertaken to ascertain which products could meet the specification. Realising that none of the available off-the-shelf products would satisfy their needs, Woking decided that it would have to commission the development of a custom solution.

"We really like the Dorset Software team. They worked in partnership with us to understand our business needs and then developed and implemented a unique, effective solution."

Ray Morgan, Chief Executive,
Woking Borough Council

The Solution

Based on the specification, Woking selected Dorset Software to provide a bespoke Democratic Process Management application. Ray Morgan, Chief Executive of Woking Borough Council, clarifies the decision: "We selected Dorset Software because of their people: They are open-minded, courteous and very capable. Dorset Software worked very closely with us to find a solution rather than to sell us what they already had."

Building a strong partnership with Woking, Dorset Software mapped the Council's internal business processes, ascertained the unique terminology utilised by the Council and determined its exact requirements through the use of a prototype and an iterative solution design process. The final solution, Shikari, is a web-based application that interfaces with the Council's intranet and public website and integrates with its document management system.

Shikari was delivered to Woking on time and to budget. Morgan, who has championed Woking's electronic government strategy, was extremely impressed at just how cost-effectively the solution was developed.

Shikari has proven invaluable to the Council. As well as providing a framework and reminders for all staff involved in the decision making process, Shikari automatically generates not only Reports, Minutes and Agendas, but also the Council's Forward Plan of Key Decisions, Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme and Action Sheets. Cllr Anne Murray, Leader of the Executive at Woking Borough Council expresses her opinion. "Shikari is an impressive performance management tool which enables Members to track progress of all Council business, including targets identified as part of the Corporate Planning process, progress on Improvement Plans and all committee decisions. Shikari is particularly helpful to Portfolio Holders."

Methodology

Shikari was delivered to Woking Borough Council and staff began loading data into the system. The system was initially only used for the Executive and Council. After this successful trial, use of the system was extended to all regulatory Committees and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Geoff Young, E-Services Programme Director for Woking thinks the transition to Shikari has been a very positive experience for the Council. "Shikari has proved to be a robust and flexible system that has integrated well with our existing electronic solutions. We have been impressed with Dorset Software's prompt and thorough support services, which have enabled the introduction of Shikari at Woking Borough Council to be smooth and successful."

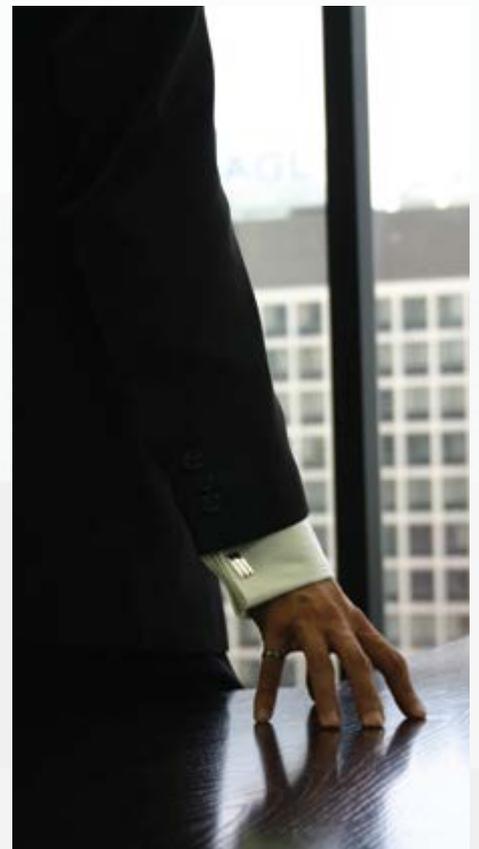
Technical Snapshot

Shikari was developed using VB.NET and a Microsoft SQL Server database along with automated MS Word templates for Council documents. Shikari integrates with a range of Woking's software applications including its Microsoft Active Directory for security and permissions; ISYS; Woking's Document Management System, which stores all relevant documents and Comino, the Council's workflow solution.

As a web application, Shikari integrates seamlessly with the Intranet and the public website, allowing the Council to publish the subjects to be discussed and the decisions on the website within minutes of authorisation. In addition, Shikari integrates with a document management system to securely and centrally store all documents relating to the process.

The Benefits

Shikari delivers a host of benefits to Woking Borough Council: It improves overall governance arrangements; it helps to improve and monitor the decision-making process and it enhances the transparency of the



Shikari enables Woking Borough Council to maintain full visibility over all legislative processes.

decision-making process for Members, Officers and the public. Sue Ewart, Head of Member Services explains: "Shikari has allowed greater transparency and access to the decision making process for both Officers and Members. It has created a framework for standard procedures and has provided Member Services with a means of facilitating the workflow of the democratic process in a more efficient and integrated manner."

Shikari also enables the outcomes of decisions to be tracked; increases accountability across the organisation and ensures that performance against targets can be measured. It also helps to streamline the decision making process, reducing the labour and the amount of user training required.

Chief Executive of Woking Borough Council, Ray Morgan, summarises his thoughts on the solution: "Introducing Shikari has provided Woking Borough Council with a corporate tool which enables us to monitor and manage our business more effectively. It encourages accountability and responsibility across the organisation and allows us to see, at a glance, the status of all business."

On Dorset Software he adds "We really like the Dorset Software team. They worked in partnership with us to understand our business needs and then developed and implemented a unique, effective solution."