

Bury Council use Destin Solutions 'Vision' to better analyse debt

Bury Council are responsible for collecting Council Tax for over 82,000 properties and Non Domestic Rates for over 5,500 properties over the course of a financial year and rely on these collections to help fund local services for citizens. Balancing the budget in any council is a complex process involving many variables and the more effectively you can predict your incoming revenue and collections the healthier your position.

To assist with this Bury Council chose to invest in Destin Solutions VISION reporting and analytics tool. VISION gives the Council access to reports which pulls data from their Council Tax, Business Rates, Sundry Debts and Housing Benefits Overpayments systems to provide them with a single view of debt.

Cameron Smith, Performance and Policy Manager at Bury Council comments "The Council has a responsibility to collect debt in an ethical way. If someone has built up a lot of debt, it is important to take account of their whole financial situation. This provides you with information you need to put together a repayment plan they are more likely to meet, without causing them additional hardship that could require expensive support from elsewhere in the public sector."

VISION assists with this by collecting data from different parts of the Council and consolidating it so that Recovery Managers can make more informed decisions on recovery approaches. It also looks at outstanding debts and identifies larger debts or multiple debts at the touch of a button, this enables Bury Council to maximise its recovery resources, so that debt can be collected more efficiently.



According to Cameron, "where VISION really stands out is in identifying how the tax base changes over time. If we want to know how much the Council has charged in a specific time frame taking into account discounts, exemptions and new properties, we can quickly and easily obtain this information and use the outputs to interpret how we may expect the tax base to change in future.

It also saves time when it comes to completing government returns. There are many calculations which need to be taken into account including business rates declared for the last year, how much citizens were charged, what discount classes were allowed, how much was paid out in appeals, how much exemptions accounted for and how much debt was written off. VISION has the capability to report on all of this, saving time and ensuring we can focus more on analysing the data rather than just reporting on it."

VISION can also assist on reporting on the success of new initiatives rolled out. For example, Bury Council made the decision to start charging more Council Tax on empty properties to help prevent properties going derelict.

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*Cameron Smith,
Performance and Policy Manager, Bury Council*

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The general worry was that if you charge people more money, they may not pay it. VISION was used to identify how much money was being collected by this small section of the case load and identified that this group of properties had a good collection rate, proving the value of the scheme.

VISION has also saved Bury Council vital resource hours by automating the process of calculating business rates appeals. This was previously a very labour intensive task, manually going through sheets of data provided by the Valuation Office. Now at any point in time it is possible to obtain this information showing how much money the Council has paid back to businesses. This enables Bury Council to start identifying any trends in this area and make more informed predictions on how much this might impact the Council throughout the remainder of the year.



Cameron goes on to say "VISION is a very good tool for data provision, data analysis and data matching. It's easy to use, intuitive, you just login in and all the data is there. With many reporting tools you need to understand how they work and how to run queries, with Destin's VISION, you don't. Working with Destin has been a good experience, they are very responsive, it's not a case of logging an issue and waiting for someone to get back to you. With larger companies it's generally them telling you what their product can do for you, with Destin they listen to what you need and develop the product around you."

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ABOUT DESTIN SOLUTIONS

Destin Solutions specialise in developing technology that supports Local Authorities and other Public Sector organisations in their aim to improve performance whilst maximising efficiencies and minimising costs.

The company's expertise include; business intelligence applications, debt reporting and analytics, performance management dashboards, development of online procedure manuals and following consultation, the delivery of workflow applications designed to meet compliance adherence needs and ensure processes are bullet-proof.