

## Reigate & Banstead Borough Council commercialise Aspire to provide property inspection services for Local Authorities

Located in Surrey, Reigate & Banstead Borough Council has a population of around 146,000 people with a property base of 61,762 domestic homes and 3,766 business properties. A popular place to live, due to its proximity to London, Gatwick Airport, the South Coast and countryside, it has experienced a relatively large increase in residential dwellings in recent years.

This has been a key driver in ensuring the Council builds on and improves its property inspections process to assist with assessing new property developments, reviewing the status of empty properties and verifying exemptions and reliefs granted to local businesses.

### Streamlining the property inspection process

Following their attendance at an event hosted by Destin Solutions last year, the Council saw first-hand the Aspire Property Inspection solution which incorporates end-to-end workflow and case management capabilities. In comparison to their incumbent solution they recognised that it could better gauge what properties and projects were outstanding at any point in time and better report on and collate the activity related to each inspection.

Taking the decision to invest in Aspire gave the council a central database that holds all property inspection information in one area, providing them with an electronic record of every visit accessible to all users for review and download. It also enables users to schedule follow up visits, set reminders and filter and sort through visits as well as report on them.

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*Simon Rosser, Head of Revenues, Benefits & Fraud at Reigate & Banstead Borough Council*

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## Reigate & Banstead BOROUGH COUNCIL Banstead | Horley | Redhill | Reigate

### Better accountability of inspection decisions

A key feature of Aspire, the council has found particularly useful is the photography function which allows the Inspector to take photos and store them from within the solution and attach them directly to the case information. There is also the ability to take video footage and both photos and videos are a valuable source of evidence for supporting decisions made and can help protect against future appeals.

### Results of a more streamlined approach

Aspire has had a significant impact on time management and the sheer number of inspections which can be carried out. In the past the Authority relied on 3 people to conduct inspections and now have just one Inspector carrying out inspections in both Reigate & Banstead as well as Mole Valley District Council. Since its implementation they have managed to complete over 5,000 inspections, incorporating 2428 empty review visits as well as creating 3,100 property records for new developments.

### Commercialising their property inspection service

Going above and beyond this, they recognised the value in commercialising the product, so that they could use it as an income revenue generation tool for the Authority. They are now effectively using Aspire to offer their own property inspection service to those Authorities who simply don't have either the time or resource to manage this in their own area.

Working with Authorities like Tandridge, Wigan, Mole Valley and North Herts, Reigate & Banstead Council carry out property inspections on behalf of these Authorities. They assign a team of Inspectors, using their own internal resource and drawing from their pool of Fraud Inspectors, and after receiving a list of properties requiring inspection from the relevant Authority they load this data into Aspire. Aspire then gives them the ability to report on and track the outcome of these visits, ensuring clients are kept updated on progress with a fully automated system.



**New property developments requiring inspection**

Liz Huish, Revenues & Exchequer Manager, Mole Valley District Council comments "Reigate & Banstead BC provide inspections for both our Council Tax and Business Rates base, providing an efficient service. Excellent reports are provided, and there has been increased council tax revenue generated following planning inspections."

**Understanding the value of support**

Simon Rosser, Head of Revenues, Benefits & Fraud at Reigate & Banstead Borough Council comments "A key concern of our clients is how quickly we can tweak the Aspire property inspection system to meet their particular and sometimes unique set of circumstances. With the Aspire solution, this is not a problem, Destin Solutions have been very reactive to



**Simon Rosser (2<sup>nd</sup> from left) & team accepting IRRV award**

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Borough Council*

our needs, quick to turn development around and getting changes or new forms created on the fly. The support provided by Destin Solutions has been integral in ensuring we can offer our own clients a first class end-to-end service, which is fully auditable and trackable.”

A recent example of this was with some tenancy reviews conducted in Margate and Ramsgate in partnership with Oxford City Council’s fraud team on behalf of a large housing provider, to ensure that properties were not being sub-let. This required a new form to be created within Aspire with very detailed questions related to this situation, this was turned around and available electronically within a week.

**Better staff engagement**

Simon goes onto comment “Since the roll out of the Aspire solution, back office staff have felt more connected and engaged in what Inspectors are doing. It is enabling individual staff to request their own property visits, if they have a situation they need verifying or qualifying and if someone is onsite conducting an inspection, they can review the data as it is being loaded in and ask Inspectors to drill down on a specific area if required.”

Aspire has provided Reigate & Banstead Borough Council with a more streamlined property inspection process and reduction in admin, enabling staff to focus their skills elsewhere. Inspectors can work remotely and don’t need to go to the office to amend or review reports or schedule additional inspections. It has also helped minimise revenue leaking out of the Council due to delays in areas like issuing of completion notices and identifying potential fraud. In monetary terms it has helped establish their commercial viability providing a sought-after service that adds value for other Local Authorities and is something they look to build on and grow, going forward.