

Adur & Worthing Councils verify property discounts and exemptions using Aspire

Adur & Worthing Councils have responsibility for collectively managing 80,035 Council Tax properties and 5,490 Business Rates properties. Two Property Inspectors are responsible for ensuring that the appropriate discounts, reliefs and exemptions have been applied to those properties as well as verifying whether properties should still be listed as void or unoccupied.

They made the decision to invest in the Aspire property inspection module around 18 months ago, upgrading from an internal system that had been developed but which was no longer supported. The internal system was still largely paper-based, findings during inspections were written on paper and then either scanned in to their internal system, or notes were typed in if the handwriting was particularly difficult to interpret. The system was also only updated once a week, which meant quite quickly, information captured during property inspections became outdated.

Streamlining the process of verifying discounts and exemptions

The Aspire solution is being used by the Councils to ensure that their valuation lists are maintained and monitored by identifying whether any alterations are required. This could typically be because of an extension to a property or the addition of a mezzanine floor, which might then affect

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Paul Fosbury
Collector/Inspector
Adur & Worthing Councils

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the rating of that property. On the Council Tax side of things it is also being used to verify that the appropriate discounts and exemptions still apply to a property. In respect of NNDR it is also being used to capture information related to small business rates relief, identifying whether the property is empty or indeed if it has been occupied so the claim for small business rates relief would in fact then be valid. Reductions and discounts related to disabilities is also an area of focus, ensuring the property meets the criteria, for example identifying whether it has wheelchair access. Similarly it is assisting Adur & Worthing Councils with addressing housing benefits enquiries and checking the validity of claims in this area.

The decision to use Aspire for Property Inspections

Paul Fosbury, Collector/Inspector at Adur & Worthing Councils comments “we considered a few options before settling on Aspire, it was user-friendly and the reporting functionality suited our requirements. We no longer need to carry files full of paperwork out in the field and we can now run reports ourselves remotely as and when we need them without having to go back to the office.



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Key features of the system that are proving beneficial

A key part of the functionality for the Council has been the ability to order visits by postcode, area or type, so that visits can be planned that are near to each other, saving time and reducing carbon footprint.

The ability to keep and view historical notes on a property has also proven invaluable particularly when the two Inspectors swap areas they are working on, meaning they have access to the information recorded from the last visit to that particular property. They are no longer relying on



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memory, and useful notes about a property can be captured that reduce the time spent conducting the inspection, for example if the property is tricky to find and down a concealed alleyway. They also have a documented record of when they last visited the property and conducted the last inspection.

Paul goes on to say "It is a better way for Property Inspectors to work, it is easier to carry just a tablet with you rather than reams of paper. Aspire is a better system for managing inspections, more efficient because of the technology behind it, as well as being user-friendly and intuitive to use."

Enabling Inspections to continue during COVID, through remote working

It also proved to be a useful tool during COVID, because it negated the need for the Inspectors to go into the office. They were able to carry on with conducting inspections where no face-to-face interaction was

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required. This typically involved more inspections of business properties and where external changes had been made to homeowner properties. They were able to see and capture results remotely by driving to a property or business and looking through windows or just visually inspecting from a distance to identify aspects like whether a loft conversion had been added to a property. They could then remotely update the findings of the inspection and plan the next day's visit schedule without going to the office.

Feedback on Technical and Customer Support received

Paul concludes "We realise there is so much more to the Aspire system than we currently require and look forward to getting more out of the system in future, as new features and enhancements are rolled out. We have found the support at Destin to be really helpful, turnaround has been quick when we have had any issues, the team have been friendly and are easily reached by phone or email. The customer support overall has been great, the team are quick to respond, very helpful and we have had a very positive experience."