

## Milton Keynes Council automate completion notice issuing process

Milton Keynes Council serve a population of 275,000 citizens comprised of around 120,000 Council Tax properties and 8,500 Business Rates properties. The Council have two dedicated Property Inspectors, one focussed solely on Council Tax properties and the other on Business Rates properties. In recent years the city has experienced rapid growth, with so much land available and accessibility into London via the M1 and fast train links, new developments are ongoing.

### Tracking the progress of new developments

Prior to the implementation of the Aspire Property Inspection module the Council had a largely manual way of tracking the progress of new developments and the issuing of completion notices was a laborious, resource intensive task.

Corey Wallinger, Development Officer at Milton Keynes Council comments "the rapid increase in new property developments has been intense, one site alone which has been agreed comprises 4,500 properties. The Aspire property inspection module has ensured we have a centralised system for issuing completion notices that can cope with the scale we need to process them."

### Historically a labour intensive, manual process

Aspire is also used by the Business Rates team to carry out empty property reviews, ensuring that properties are not used for storage or any other purpose. In the past these inspections would have required detailed documents about

“

*The rapid increase in new property developments has been intense, one site alone which has been agreed comprises 4,500 properties. The Aspire property inspection module has ensured we have a centralised system for issuing completion notices that can cope with the scale we need to process them.*

**Corey Wallinger**  
Development Officer  
Milton Keynes Council

”



Milton Keynes Civic Offices

the property to have been printed, the inspection carried out, additional information captured on the print outs and then scanned and added back into another system and then manually updated in the Northgate system. This made the process of centralisation of documentation complex and resource intensive.

From a Council Tax perspective it was a similar story, there was largely manual processes in place to monitor new property developments. An Inspector would work from a spreadsheet, note down the plot numbers and scan and save the outputs centrally. There was no mechanism to send out alerts or flags to say a completion notice should be issued.

### Streamlining the property inspections process

The implementation of Aspire represented a real streamlining and automation in the process of conducting Inspections. Corey goes on to say "we've added a lot to the system since the initial implementation, including the ability to automatically generate the completion notices on our behalf and assigning the properties to a Developer.



milton keynes council

We now have all property inspection data centrally stored and it assists with dispute resolutions, having all evidence, photos and reports to hand to be able to handle disputes.”

Aspire generates completion notices by merging Milton Keynes’ template document with the details of the property, the outcome of the visit and the developer or owners details. This has resulted in increased turnaround of issuing completion notices. For example, Milton Keynes can now produce around 150 completion notices in a matter of hours, historically something that would have taken days of work.



Aerial Photo of the village of Milton Keynes

#### **Supporting a hybrid approach to working**

It has also supported a hybrid approach to working with less people now office based, Inspectors can now get access to all the information they need to conduct and complete the inspections directly from their iPad, minimising any need to go into the office.

#### **Aspire features that are making a difference**

The reporting features within Aspire have also proven useful, Corey goes on to comment “the report on completion notices issued is particularly good, we can see at any point in time how many completion notices have been issued throughout the year and break this down by month and filter to a specific day of issue. We can monitor each batch of notices sent out and quite easily use this to update the Northgate system. We run this report at least twice a week because of the sheer volume of completion notices being sent out.”

“

*Overall it has been a positive exercise. We have gone from having a labour intensive, manual process to a fully functioning system. We are now working at a speed we have never achieved before. We have issued over 2,500 completion notices in the last year and are truly maximising efficiency.*

**Corey Wallinger**  
**Development Officer**  
**Milton Keynes Council**

”

The bulk upload feature has also proven popular when logging new development visits. The Council can effectively mass upload inspections, including photograph evidence, in bulk rather than having to submit each individual one, when you have over 100 properties on a new site, this saves a huge amount of time and effort.

On the Business Rates side of things, the work list function has proven useful allowing team leaders to allocate specific inspections to the Inspector and all of these appear in one place so that an effective route can be plotted, saving on travel time and expense.

#### **Proactive approach to inspections, driving more revenue**

As a result of implementing Aspire, the Council has seen a massive increase in revenue, with completion notices going out more consistently than ever before. Properties are being brought into taxation at an earlier date, rather than waiting until they are occupied and being reliant on people informing them, the Council can proactively charge the developers from an agreed fixed date.

Corey concludes “overall it has been a positive exercise. We have gone from having a labour intensive, manual process to a fully functioning system. We are now working at a speed we have never achieved before. We have issued over 2,500 completion notices in the last year and are truly maximising efficiency.”