

# Chelmer Housing Partnership Case Study

## Chelmer Housing Partnership Selects **bluesource** to Implement SharePoint for New Intranet and Document Management System

### Background

Based in Chelmsford, Essex, Chelmer Housing Partnership (CHP) is the largest developing not-for-profit housing association in the county, providing affordable housing to rent and buy. CHP employs more than 200 people and manages over 7,000 properties housing over 13,000 people.



CHP needed to replace its intranet which was no longer fit for purpose being difficult to manage, update, maintain and navigate. Following an internal communications review, CHP created a joint project team between the Information & Communications Technology (ICT) and Communications departments. The project team had two objectives with the overall driving aim to improve communication – first, to replace the current intranet, and second, to replace a shared network drive where employees store files and folders.

### Challenges

CHP's existing intranet was built on legacy technology using Microsoft Front Page. The old intranet had a number of issues: unwieldy in its structure, difficult to navigate, inconsistent in its design, the content lacked ownership and management, and it was difficult to maintain, particularly for non-IT staff. It also lacked credibility as much of the information was out of date, and there was no compelling reason for staff to visit or use the site.

The absence of document version control resulted in massive amounts of duplication and with over 85,000 Word documents, 22,000 Excel spreadsheets, 8,000 PDFs and 13,000+ images, all without metadata, information was difficult to find. This resulted in staff having to rely on asking each other where to find key pieces of information. This wasn't practical, accurate or efficient.

CHP knew they wanted to use Microsoft Office SharePoint Server to create a new intranet and purchased the Enterprise Edition of MOSS along with two well-specified servers. CHP created a pilot system internally, which was well received, and was used to demonstrate some of SharePoint's features and functionality to different business teams and management. CHP realised it didn't have the skills in-house to effectively manage and implement a fully robust, fully deployed, future-proofed system across the entire organisation and so decided to tender for the services of a specialist SharePoint consultancy.

## The Solution



We created a business case, invited various specialist consultancies to tender, and measured them against an in-depth scoring system.

**bluesource** came out on top. **bluesource** not only understood the complexities of working in the SharePoint environment, but they also have the breadth of expertise to provide a complete data management solution. They worked closely with our business teams to translate the specific requirements to ensure the system reflected our users' needs. By sharing their skills and technical expertise, **bluesource's** knowledge transfer means that our ICT staff are able to maintain the day-to-day running of the system.



James Dickman,  
Service Development Manager for CHP

Working together, CHP and **bluesource** created the new intranet branded internally as 'YourSite'. YourSite contains four key areas: the 'Home Page' which includes current news, company-wide calendar, useful links, acts as a portal to the rest of the site and builds on SharePoint's comprehensive Search facility. The second area, called 'Tools of Our Trade', quickly connects staff with the information, forms, reports and key applications they need to access in their daily working lives. 'Taking an Active Part' greatly enables collaboration between teams to work on projects, plans and initiatives. The 'Corporate' area contains key information around (amongst others areas) HR, policies and procedures, health and safety, and governance.



The intranet has been extremely well received. We ran training and familiarisation sessions and people are now able to find things much more easily, which has led to greater efficiency and productivity internally. We created a 'YourSite Project Team', which included a champion from each department to articulate the specific requirements around content and design. CHP and **bluesource** were able to translate these requirements into a functional specification. This not only ensured the site was fit for purpose, but also created a concept of ownership internally and lead to organisation-wide buy-in of the system. Different members of CHP staff now have the responsibility to maintain different areas of the site.



## Results

**bluesource's** successful implementation ensured the new intranet went live in December 2008, on time and within budget.

**bluesource** is now working with CHP on the second phase of the project to implement a new document management system that will replace departmental network storage with new team sites.

Each department will have its own site, providing a central storage repository enabling better collaboration, greater efficiency, full document version control, and eliminates the existing massive amount of duplication. Each departmental site will have its own logical structure and each department will be trained on how to use it and shown how to properly manage files and electronic content. This will not only save time and create greater efficiency, but CHP will also benefit from accessing the right information at the right time. CHP's system is future proofed to manage more than a terabyte of storage, and the second phase will go live at the end of February 2009.



CHP is a great example of an organisation that wants to foster collaboration, efficiency and productivity through better data management. By implementing Microsoft Office SharePoint Server we are able to deliver a system that not only fits the business case, but also provides agility, consistency and richer functionality. Working in partnership with the in-house ICT and Communications teams, our consultants have been able to share their technical expertise to ensure CHP is able to maintain and further develop the system independently moving forward.



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