



Gazetteer-on-Sea

In common with other local authorities, Bournemouth Borough Council received its new Mapping Services Agreement in mid-2005. Alistair Maclenan question Council business analyst Neil Poulton on the ensuing challenges and achievements

Alistair Maclenan (AM): What is the Mapping Services Agreement?

Neil Poulton (NP): The Mapping Service Agreement replaced the former Service Level Agreement which governed the supply of geographic data between local authorities in the United Kingdom and the national mapping agency; Ordnance Survey.

One of the most significant outcomes of the Mapping Services Agreement was the creation of address databases working with Intelligent Addressing known as the Local Land & Property Gazetteer.

AM: Had you already compiled your local gazetteer information at this stage?

NP: Bournemouth Borough Council had already compiled a database of street and building information with a piece of software which operated on a standalone basis.

The dataset contained a complete address base for the Borough; approximately 110,000 addresses and these addresses had been sent to Intelligent Addressing for upload into the National Land & Property Gazetteer hub. Bournemouth Borough Council held a level 2 status with Intelligent Addressing but the next key stage for the authority was to achieve level 1 status and to be able to send regular updates.

AM: And you couldn't do that with the existing systems?

NP: Progress had been made but what we have could not evolve much further due to its own proprietary architecture. The project had focused solely on creating the address base to BS7666 standard and had not con-

sidered any other factors. The Local Street Gazetteer was also not being maintained and had not been submitted to the National Street Gazetteer hub for over two years. Furthermore, the software utilised for the local streets was no longer supported by the software provider and a replacement piece of software would need to be acquired.

AM: So what did you need from the new software?

NP: We needed a BS7666 compliant system which would support both the Local Land & Property Gazetteer and the Local Street Gazetteer, as Bournemouth Borough Council is a unitary authority and we have responsibility for both.

The software also had to be capable of data management and data dissemination for all future developments using these two gazetteers to easily connect with the numerous address based business applications used within the Authority. Once we decided that the two separate pieces of software we had were no longer sufficient for the business needs of the organisation was to acquire financial backing and to evaluate all the software available in the market place. We explored all the possible solutions and we investigated the pros and cons of software, the company and the capital and on-going costs.

AM: Who did you contact for help?

NP: Aligned-Assets are a well known company in this field and Bournemouth was well aware of them prior to selecting their Symphony

Suite software. We talked to fellow custodians at regional gazetteer meetings and Aligned Assets was a very popular choice for software supplier to many authorities. In August 2005, we invited Aligned Assets to present the Symphony Suite to us.

AM: And the presentation convinced you that they were the right partners for you?

NP: We considered a number of factors to choose the right Gazetteer Management System for Bournemouth and the comprehensive benefits of using the Symphony Suite really stood out for us.

With the Symphony Suite we were able to maintain the Local Land and Property Gazetteer and the Local Street Gazetteer including the Associated Street Data that is required under the standard. Symphony Suite worked seamlessly with our existing corporate MapInfo GIS system as well as linking to our back office applications, which covers a range of file formats. Not only that but we can now address match the local gazetteer with those back office applications - a really useful cross-referencing tool.

Vitality, the new system has allowed the whole authority to access its Local Land and Property Gazetteer meaning that the people who need this information can now use it. On top of this since the cost implication was an important factor, Bournemouth Borough Council decided the installation of the Symphony Suite would be in a phased process to make the implementation more affordable to ICT Operations (who supported and funded the initial acquisition). Aligned Assets was very supportive of this.

AM: So you feel that this project has made your life easier?

NP: Yes! The introduction of the Symphony Suite to Bournemouth has made life much easier for all concerned or interested with address management within the Authority.

The modules that make up the Symphony Suite provide a total solution for data cleansing, matching, management and dissemination of the two gazetteers. This fulfils all of Bournemouth's requirements both internally to the authority and externally through partnerships.

We are now capable of maintaining our land, street and property gazetteers and we can view the information in both textual and spa-

tial formats. This will assist us with the data quality standards of the gazetteers.

The key officers involved with the maintenance of the gazetteers are impressed with how simple and easy the Symphony is to use. Compared with the competitors we evaluated, this solution is an affordable way of communicating with several third party software applications in a structured yet flexible way.

AM: Has this easier life led to results?

NP: Protocols and procedures are now in place for the maintenance of the Local Land & Property Gazetteer and the Local Street Gazetteer. The maintenance involved is an amalgamation of Planning Design & Control Services, Street Naming and Numbering, Building Consultancy, Technical Services, Customer Services, Legal Services, ICT Operations, Public Protection and Transportation Services.

The final result is that Bournemouth has now achieved Level 1 status with Intelligent Addressing and has fulfilled all the requirements of the October 2006 deadline as set out in the MSA. This has all been achieved since the implementation of the Symphony Suite and a combination hard work and dedication from Bournemouth Borough Council and Aligned Assets personnel.

AM: Looking to the future, what developments have you got planned?

NP: The continual development of the Local Land & Property Gazetteer as the corporate address database for the authority is vitally important as we increase the influence of the gazetteer throughout the entire authority.

To entirely achieve this aim specific business processes and corporate objectives are currently being reviewed and developed. The next stages for disseminating the gazetteer data, and discussions have already taken place with third party application providers, are for use with the electoral roll, council tax and non-domestic rates, social service and leisure services.

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Bournemouth's Neil Poulton