



Top Marks for Guildford Borough Council's revenues & benefits service working in partnership with Advanced Business Link

Guildford Borough Council Revenues Services division is responsible for the collection of £50 million in council tax (local household taxation) and £55 million in business rates (business taxation). Housing and council tax benefit payments in excess of £20 million are made to over 6,000 people. 37 staff administers these services which cost the Council £1.3 million each year.

Local authorities are always trying to find ways of increasing access to Council services. Taxpayers are always looking for the Council to provide more facilities at a lower cost. If the Council could provide routine information on line, staff conventionally employed providing such information could be re-deployed in new, value-added activities which could fund service improvements elsewhere.

Guildford Borough Council is no different to most public bodies in that the information it holds is generally of a personal and sensitive nature. Security is therefore a vital component of any web enabled facility. It becomes even more important when the aim is to put real time data on the world wide web. The whole purpose of trying to make information available to customers is that it is relevant and meaningful. It is also important that developments do not incur an overhead to the Division in terms of extra servers, backups and saves. The Revenues service is lean on resources and expansion to accommodate the project was not an option.

The solution for Guildford Revenues has been ABL's Strategi solution which enables the AS/400 to create and deliver dynamic web pages to any web browser. The software running on the Council's AS400 is able to extract data on request and place it into a web browser in a way that is meaningful to taxpayers. An Internet address is used to access a web form.

The advantage of ABL's solution is that the data viewed by taxpayers replicates the data being used by staff to access customer accounts. The security inherent in the AS400 interfaces with 'Strategi' to provide a robust platform for Guildford to achieve some of its information objectives. The data is also available 24 hours a day... 7 days a week. Apart from routine maintenance that has to be carried out on the AS400, we will be able to timelessly provide our customers with up to date balances on their council tax and business rates accounts.

Guildford Revenues have been delighted with ABL's assistance in bringing the project to fruition.