Vale of Aylesbury Housing

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Vale of Aylesbury Housing Trust boosts staff productivity and efficiency with

SITEH◉LPDESK.COM

Building communities that people can be proud of

The Vale of Aylesbury Housing Trust is a not-for-profit Registered Social Landlord providing homes for people in Buckingham, Aylesbury and the surrounding villages. Its aim is to provide affordable homes and build communities that people can be proud of.

The Trust was formed in July 2006 following the transfer of 7,250 tenant's and 600 lease-holders homes, around 2,400 garages and 40 commercial properties from Aylesbury Vale District Council. The Vale has committed to investing £105 million to improve the standard of all of its resident's homes, by 2010.

In partnership with AVDC, the Trust is also investing £500,000 pa through the Community Chest in projects that benefit all the communities across the Vale.

Growing demands, increased challenges

Since it established just over three years ago and up until about one year ago the company was using its own access database system to record and log calls to the IT department. Being a fairly new business, IT manager Rick Smith didn't want to invest money into this system as it wasn't robust or sophisticated enough to provide the support required to take the management of enquiries to the IT department into the future. It was never intended to be a long-term solution.

As the organisation grew, so too did the demands on the IT department. Using the basic database system soon proved to be challenging and in most cases completely inefficient.

❝ Upon investigation, we discovered that many calls weren't being logged, and those that were weren't being logged correctly or in an automated fashion, it was a nightmare when staff went away on holiday because it was near on impossible to work out who was doing what and what stage each query was at. We also found it very difficult to produce accurate, detailed reports for the management team. It was becoming a problem and one that we could no longer ignore ❞ explains Smith.

Smith decided to do some initial market research to see what kind of support packages were available. In line with this The Vale of Aylesbury invited a number of businesses (large and small) to tender and eventually settled with a system from Sitehelpdesk.com which it believed met all of its business requirements and at a fraction of the price of competing systems. Being a registered charity, the Trust also qualified for a 15 per cent discount, which made Sitehelpdesk.com's offering even more competitively priced.

Efficiency and productivity is the name of the game

In an attempt to improve the overall productivity of the IT department and the efficiency of the management system, the Trust purchased sitehelpdesk-IT, WMIMonitor, EMLMonitor and SLAMonitor from Sitehelpdesk.com for use across all 170 of its full-time users. The company needed a sophisticated but uncomplicated system that would centralise the call-logging process and reporting structure so that everyone had clear visibility of the IT department to help them to increase productivity and respond to calls more quickly.

"It was vital for us to not only be able to pull everything together in one place, but also to see where all of our assets were located. We needed a system that was simple to set up, would be ready to implement straight away and also one that met our budget requirements", added Smith.

Sitehelpdesk-IT provides the Trust with a web-based system to log calls from end users to its internal IT department and help it respond to IT issues more efficiently. It also allows the IT department to keep a log of all IT equipment and track assets. The software logs all calls and monitors how quickly each query is dealt with to provide detailed reports for senior managers about how the IT department is performing.

Sitehelpdesk.com's add-on applications including SLAmonitor, EMLmonitor and WMImonitor are also being used by the Trust. SLAmonitor helps to measure service level agreements and manages end user expectations by alerting the IT department when a service level threshold has been exceeded. EMLmonitor connects to the IT department's mail server and audits emails that are meant for them so that a ticket can be logged and a response is immediately sent to the user. Giving a clear indication of how many software components are running at any given time, WMImonitor is an auditing tool which enables the IT department to view what software they have purchased and how many computers this is installed on.

66 We have been so impressed with the way that sitehelpdesk-IT has allowed our IT department to operate more efficiently 99

Dramatic reduction in outstanding IT issues

The Vale of Aylesbury Trust has recently gone live with a new housing system called QLX Housing (which went live in December 2008). In line with this the Trust replaced a number of databases and needed to keep on top of report writing and other data requirements and as such, used the sitehelpdesk system to manage this project.

"Before implementing the Sitehelpdesk.com systems we had over 300 IT department queries/ issues outstanding, now the number of issues has decreased dramatically to less than 40. Now we are able to justify our IT department's productivity levels, we can obtain detailed reports on the times that people log calls and this has already had an impact on our office hours in terms of a change in the times that we have staff available on the helpdesk", said Smith.

The efficiency of the system has helped the Trust to isolate certain issues and resolve them quickly and if staff members are on holiday it is easy to see what they have been doing and what stage they have got to with each of their queries with minimal fuss.

"Having a solid reporting function was also a key priority for us", explains Smith.

"We needed to report back to the management team to ensure that targets were being met, problems were being solved and that nothing was taking too long to complete. Using sitehelpdesk-IT for reporting has also given us some unexpected benefits; just recently when a member of the IT staff left, the open call list went up and we found that it took longer for the remaining staff to deal with IT calls. Having this information to report back to senior management gave us a business case to be able to recruit again – without the sitehelpdesk.com software it may have taken longer for us to be able to prove this. In essence we also needed to report back on staff productivity and the sitehelpdesk.com solutions allow us to do all of this and more".

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The future

Sitehelpdesk.com's software is flexible and can used within any support department. The Trust is now in the process of rolling sitehelpdesk.com out to its facilities department to assist staff managing calls relating to the office environment. This will provide the facilities department with its own helpdesk. "We have been so impressed with the way that sitehelpdesk-IT has allowed our IT department to operate more efficiently that we decided to roll out sitehelpdesk onto other departments. It is proven to be great value for money for the Trust and is something we now could not manage without", concludes Smith.