

Case Study: Dorset, Bournemouth & Poole



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Dorset, Bournemouth & Poole Highway Authorities invest in shared services to improve road maintenance

Highways Teams Join Together in UK First. Dorset, Bournemouth & Poole Highway Authorities invest in shared services to improve road maintenance.

Shared Service delivery is becoming an ever more high profile public sector issue, as Central Government continues to drive for significant cost savings across the board. Yet there is a clear divergence across the wider public sector about the extent of services that should be included within the shared services remit.

In Dorset, The Highway Departments for Dorset County Council and both Bournemouth & Poole Unitary Authorities, recognised the requirements of TMA (Traffic Management Act) for greater cross border coordination and collaboration between Local Authorities and works promoters. This prompted the three councils to investigate the benefits of a shared services approach across the Highways teams.

Coordinate Services

Using a software solution from Exor Corporation, the three councils, lead by Dorset, are able to co-ordinate services throughout the region far more efficiently and effectively. As Paul Moon, Highway Systems Manager at Dorset County Council explains, "The Shared Service model offered clear opportunities not only for economies of scale but opened up the door for the delivery of consistent and enhanced services across the region that would benefit our citizens in terms of the service they receive, as well as the three departments."

He continues, "We had to upgrade the system in order to meet the latest requirements of TMA but didn't want to be purely reactive to the climate, which is when we started looking at shared services in greater depth. When we knew that Bournemouth and Poole were also looking to invest in upgrading their Street Works system we realised that this was a perfect opportunity to trial expanding the scope of shared services beyond the traditional departments and into the Highways Authorities."

For the Poole Authority the decision to adopt a shared services approach was a undisputed choice. As Jennie Dunne, Technical Administrator at Poole explains, "We had worked with Exor previously so understood elements of the solution but due to a noticeable change in staff there was a clear need to invest in training. However, through the partnership with Dorset and Bournemouth we were able to circumvent this need and acquire an extensive knowledge base in addition to a more advanced version of the Exor solution."

Paul Moon, Highways Systems Manager, Dorset County Council

"As well as being the first UK Shared Services approach to TMA this is Dorset, Bournemouth & Poole's first comprehensive, cross-council Shared Service and it has been a resounding success. We have gained significant savings and efficiencies in terms of the set-up and licensing costs by adopting a Shared Services approach, but by facilitating the sharing of skills and knowledge the level of expertise within our highways teams across the region has increased which can only improve the overall quality of service we deliver to our citizens."

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Cost Savings

Paul James, NRSWA Officer, at Bournemouth agrees, "Joining forces with Dorset and Poole just made sense, Dorset project managed the Exor implementation on behalf of the other authorities and this resulted in cost and human resource savings at every stage. In addition through our collaboration we have managed to increase the overall knowledge levels of our teams. Now instead of going directly to Exor if we encounter any problems, or have any questions about the functionality of the system, we can ask one of the other teams. They may have already overcome the problem and be able to provide a solution without having to go to Exor."

Key to achieving this objective was the choice of a solution that could integrate across the three councils via a web-interface, which would be flexible enough to support the important differences in working practices that would remain within the councils but also easy to change and adapt from one central location. As Kevin Cheleda, the Road Space Manager at Dorset County Council explains, "The state of the road network is never far from the top of the Government's agenda, making it a highly unstable environment to work in; there are always legislative changes and our plans are often subject to change at very short notice due to environmental factors such as the floods over recent years. As a result, we wanted to ensure that the system we implemented could continue to be automated and changed post implementation without requiring external programming expertise. This is what the Exor system has given us, and we hope it will provide inspiration for other councils across the UK."

First Shared Services for Highways

The Exor system went live in June 2008, and across the three councils to co-ordinate the management of the road network. The system provides the tools to obtain an accurate insight into the entire road network estate that combines assets, mapping and costs, both within and across the three authorities, enabling them to make the right long term decisions rather than simply responding to immediate and apparent requirements.

As Moon concludes, "As well as being the first UK Shared Services approach to TMA this is Dorset, Bournemouth & Poole's first comprehensive, cross-council Shared Service and it has been a resounding success. Not only have we gained significant savings and efficiencies in terms of the initial set-up and the licensing costs by adopting a Shared Services approach, but by facilitating the sharing of skills and knowledge the level of expertise within our highways teams across the region has increased which can only improve the overall quality of service we deliver to our citizens."

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