



Wiltshire Council improves customer services with Aareon 360 Customer Portal

One of the greatest challenges facing local authorities in the current climate is the need to deliver the same services to residents while being unable to offer the same level of personal interaction. Restrictions on face-to-face contact have meant that housing officers can only visit those in the greatest need, while council call centres are fielding unprecedented call volumes.

At the same time, councils are being expected to provide a higher level of service for their customers, maintain and improve housing standards and faster response times, while budgets have been repeatedly reduced in all areas.

Housing providers must find ways to focus their limited resources on the activities and customers that need the most attention, while still improving service levels for all customers. For this reason, councils are turning to self-service portals, making it possible for tenants to help themselves.

Challenge: Managing more customer enquiries

Calls to customer contact centres have skyrocketed during the pandemic, since customers can no longer make simple enquiries during a home visit or make enquiries at the council offices. Having identified that a large proportion of customer calls related to simple account enquiries such as rent statements and updating customer data, Wiltshire Council

realised that they needed to encourage customers that are able, to serve themselves by using a customer portal, as this would reduce the volume of calls and prioritise customers in the greatest need.

With over 5,000 properties under their management, Wiltshire Council have been using the Aareon QL Housing Management Software for many years and realised that a new customer portal would need to integrate closely with this system. Knowing that similar housing providers such as Curo were also using the system gave them confidence that it would also meet the needs and expectations of Wiltshire's customers.

Solution: Aareon 360 Customer Portal: intuitive self service

Aareon's 360 Customer Portal integrates directly with Aareon QL, meaning that information can be captured once and then shared across the

housing department in a single source of the truth. Tailored to Wiltshire's own website and branding, the portal provides a consistent and intuitive interface for customers. The portal allows customers to access self-service facilities through PC, Tablet and Smart Phones via a browser, so that they can view their rent account, set up payment arrangements and direct debit mandates, raise repairs calls and check their repairs history.

Crucially, customers can update their personal and household details from the portal. The portal also features an integrated budget planner to help customers manage their household finances.

Aareon began the implementation work in September 2020 and the portal went live in November 2020, incorporating a seamless integration with Wiltshire Council's instance of Aareon QL.

Result: Customers appreciate improved access to services

Wiltshire have already seen considerable take up of the new customer portal: in the first few months, over 1,620 Wiltshire tenants signed up. Wiltshire Council are running a personalised communications programme to encourage further uptake with new and existing tenants.

Usage data from the portal has also indicated that the majority of registered customers are using the portal to manage their accounts as Wiltshire hoped, using the portal to check their rent statements and request repairs, helping to reduce the volume of calls to the council office. This not only reduces workload for housing

officers; it also reduces the cost of recording and responding to customer enquiries. In recent months, many of Wiltshire's Housing staff have been redeployed to support Covid activities, meaning that the drive to self-service has even greater urgency.

Customers are also taking the opportunity to update their own personal records, contact details, preferences and more. These records can easily become out-of-date, so the customer-led updates are proving hugely beneficial for data insights and the empowering the customer to review their own data and manage the changes themselves.

Customer feedback has been extremely positive, pointing to strong confidence in customers using the portal, better access to routine services and increased satisfaction overall. "Since inviting customers to sign up to the Aareon 360 Customer Portal, we have had some great feedback on how intuitive and convenient it is to use. Customers welcome being able to manage their housing account without having to call the contact centre because it saves them time" says Simon Hendey.

Following the successful implementation of portal, Wiltshire are participating in the Aareon QL Next Generation Programme: a customer-led engagement and development programme for the new fully integrated, browser-based and cloud-ready Housing Management Software Solution.

For more information on the 360 Customer Portal, please contact us at hello@aareon.com, or via your Aareon Account Manager.

Customer Tenant Feedback

"I found it nice and easy to use, it is straightforward and easy to follow."

"It's brilliant because everything is in one place, you don't have to search around, you get straight to what you need."

"It is very good and very easy to use."

"It's more convenient, most people nowadays don't have time to spend in a call queue."

Why Aareon 360 Customer Portal?

- Reduce touchpoints
- Free up resources
 - Cost savings
- Give customers 24/7 access to your services
- Help your customers where they really need it
 - Increase first time fixes

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