

Case study

Eastbourne Borough Council

Introduction

Local councils provide valuable services to residents at an affordable rate but focusing on costs too much can have detrimental effects.

This case study explores the challenges Eastbourne Borough Council faced before launching its LATCo and how investing in digital solutions helped improve the efficiency and costs of its waste operations.

The organisation

Eastbourne is located in South East England and has a population of 103,251 residents. The local council plays a key role in community leadership and enabling the long-term sustainability and resilience of its communities. As part of their 2020 – 2024 corporate plan, Eastbourne Borough Council will tackle waste by launching waste reduction education campaigns, addressing waste crime and reviewing operations.

A number of years ago Eastbourne Borough Council was part of a county-wide joint waste collection partnership with Rother District Council, Wealden District Council and Hastings Borough Council. The aim of the partnership was to provide reliable waste management services across all of the counties at an affordable cost to the residents.

The partnership outsourced their operations to a private waste collections contractor, who used three separate suppliers to capture waste data, track the collection vehicles and provide valuable information on the operations.



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The challenge

With the partnership focusing on cost efficiency, Eastbourne Council was concerned with quality of service. There was an increase in the number of missed bins, residents were waiting up to eight weeks for new or replacement bins and waste collection crews were unable to accurately record contaminated waste. This led to rising levels of resident complaints. The lack of operational responsibility between the contractor and suppliers, and inefficient commercial management resulted in lost revenue that could have been better invested.

In 2018 Eastbourne Borough Council formed a joint authority with Lewes District Council, but their waste operations were kept separate due to the respective political sovereignties. Then in May 2019, the Environment First brand was launched to bring a consistent quality and culture to the waste management operations in the two areas.



The joint waste collection partnership wanted to move to another outsourced contractor to improve service but in July 2019 Eastbourne Borough Council decided to break away and bring their waste management operations in-house under a new local authority trading company called South East Environmental Services Limited. The change of identity meant a new start and new processes were required to help Environment First achieve its objectives.

The solution

Environment First required a reliable waste management system to support their new infrastructure and following a thorough review of available options, Whitespace was chosen as the supplier.

Moving to a single supplier brought consistency to the services and eliminated confusion over operational responsibility that had been experienced previously with multiple suppliers. Whitespace's solutions give Eastbourne the functionality to manage their waste collections efficiently and record the valuable intel required to make informed strategic decisions.

The in-cab software helps waste collection teams keep the customer services centres up to date on their round progress in real-time, providing valuable information like why a bin was not collected. This allows them to manage resident queries efficiently. Crews can also use the in-cab software to report on types of contamination, supporting follow up education and enforcement.

The website and CRM system integration has been improved as well with more online services available to residents, and the automation of processes has reduced paper and helped reprioritise workloads on more meaningful outputs.

Whitespace Analytics summarises the operation's performance using a clear dashboard showing data on missed bins, contamination and round progress. Using this information Eastbourne Borough Council can drill down into specific areas, helping them make informed strategic improvements like reducing weekly collections to reduce carbon footprint.

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The results

Using an integrated digital solution from a single supplier makes it easier to manage waste operations, helping Eastbourne Borough Council's strategy to improve waste and recycling performance in line with government targets.

Since the new solution went live, there has been a 50% reduction in paper usage, over 60% reduction in customer complaints and a significant reduction in the number of bins missed during collection rounds, up to 70% successful within the first 8 weeks.

Information can be collected during the round, including photographic evidence, to capture evidence of offending residents and inform education programmes. Collection crews can also use the tablet to report excessive side waste like fly-tipping, directly to the back office, giving the council immediate evidence of anti-social behaviour activities. The council can then determine the best approach to addressing these concerns in a timely manner via their education and enforcement programmes.

The new solution has been such a success that it was also implemented in Lewes Council in October 2020 where intel collected has allowed them to reduce their fleet by four rounds, saving almost 90,000 miles worth of fuel. There are other Environment First council services that are currently outsourced which are being reviewed and may adopt the digital solutions provided by Whitespace.

The products

- **Whitespace Municipal** - manages household waste collection service operations
- **Whitespace Environmental** - manages grounds maintenance other environmental activities
- **Whitespace Mobile** - links field teams to the customer services centres in real-time
- **Whitespace Analytics** - provides business intelligence tools and management reporting capabilities



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