



Epping Forest Council Migration – Overcoming challenges to improve customer outcomes.

Local authority profile

Local authority: Epping Forest Council

Served notice: 28 March 2023

Date of migration: 25 April 2023

Data type: Digital

Number of charges migrated: 60,822

Software supplier: NEC

Migration supplier: HM Land Registry

Delivery model: HM Land Registry delivered

Live operating mode: M3, migrating to Arcus

Before the programme

Epping Forest Council was one of the first local authorities to begin the discovery phase of migrating to the Local Land Charges Register. The team put themselves forward in the understanding that they would receive more support than councils joining later. “Although we did receive the benefit of HM Land Registry (HMLR) resources on numerous occasions, our migration was long and complex. There were many challenges that could have been avoided, had we had the experience and knowledge of other councils,” said Christine Ferrigi, Senior Responsible Officer at Epping Forest.

Hampered by the COVID-19 pandemic “the team not only had to learn how to do their jobs remotely and keep everyone safe, but they also had to do some of the work that, under normal circumstances, HMLR would have done alongside us,” said Christine

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Christine Ferrigi
Senior Responsible Officer at Epping Forest

During the programme

The project was further slowed when the planning team changed their IT planning system, causing significant problems with data. “The new supplier then tried to cleanse the data to their own standards, which overrode a lot of our hard work and hindered, rather than helped us,” said Kathy Walker, Senior Business Support Officer.

The team used their transition payment to fund overtime to help get the project over the line. After it became apparent that the migration deadline was going to be missed, the team had an honest conversation with the Head of the LLC Programme. It was agreed that HMLR would take a significant portion of the remaining work from the Epping Forest team to ease the pressure.

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After the programme

After migration the picture is very different: Epping Forest has continued its hard work to make sure their LLC data is of the highest quality and is reaping the rewards of the register.

“I’ve been really impressed with the quality of the data coming through in our monthly quality assurance reports,” said HMLR Relationship Manager, Callum Robinson. “Epping Forest consistently passes with flying colours, many months they achieve 100% acceptable quality levels across the board. That isn’t overly common.”

Their excellent data means that Epping Forest is providing customers with high quality search results, which can be accessed instantly (for comparison, the average turnaround time to obtain search results from local authorities across the country is 12.7 days). Epping Forest’s customers have also benefitted from a reduction in cost to the LLC1 price, from £23.50 to £15 since going live.

The council has seen a reduction in operating costs since migrating to the register. Workloads have significantly decreased and the team has reduced by two full-time staff through natural attrition.

The team initially worried that they would receive an increased number of queries, “I was surprised at how few queries we got,” said Kathy. “I almost expected half a dozen emails a day saying ‘Why doesn’t this agree? Why haven’t you put this on the register?’ But I was pleasantly surprised.”

Senior Business Support Officer, Helena Passway, has a theory as to why the queries are few and far between: “The effort we put in when we were doing all the prep work for the data cleansing made a difference. We cared about getting it right.”

“We’ve got a good relationship manager too,” added Local Land Charges Officer Anita Carter. “Callum is always at the end of the phone if we have a question. He’s been a big source of support to us all the way through.”

Epping Forest is already looking to the future, with plans to compete for best Local Land Charges team in the country (an annual award given by HMLR to the best performing local authority on the register). They will further improve their customer experience by optimising their CON29 process. “87% of our customers that request an LLC1 search also request CON29, so to truly speed up the property purchasing process, councils must have efficient and effective processes that quicken turnaround times on CON29 requests,” said Christine.

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Anita Carter
Local Land Charges Officer

What advice would you give to other Authorities?

Resourcing was an issue for Epping Forest. The unknown nature of the project meant they had to use overtime to manage resource, which took a toll on the team. From a wellbeing perspective, the team advise a different approach to councils still in the discovery phase: “Try to get a rough idea of staffing levels for the project. Approach councils that are already live to see if there is a possibility of sharing resources on a secondment basis, using the transition payment from HMLR,” said Christine.

“Also, even though HMLR does speak to your stakeholders to let them know what to expect, I think we missed a trick by not doing our own internal comms – we could have prepped our members and portfolio holders in advance,” continued Christine.

“Some of the councillors didn’t know what a local land charge was – it would have been good to have those conversations to check everyone understood exactly what the project entailed and all the potential impacts and outcomes.”

“Make sure you liaise properly with your supplier,” added Kathy “Everyone needs to be on the same page with expectations around your data.”

“I think I would just say to people that haven’t migrated yet that you know your data’s important, so get it correct and accurate,” said Anita. “It’s worth spending that time in advance of migration because it will help you post migration. You need to put in the time and effort and then it is worth it in the end.”

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