

Northgate has been working with North Hertfordshire to deliver a number of strategic and operational assignments to transform service delivery; enabling a greater focus on customer service and efficiency, and improving the council's overall performance.

Transforming service delivery

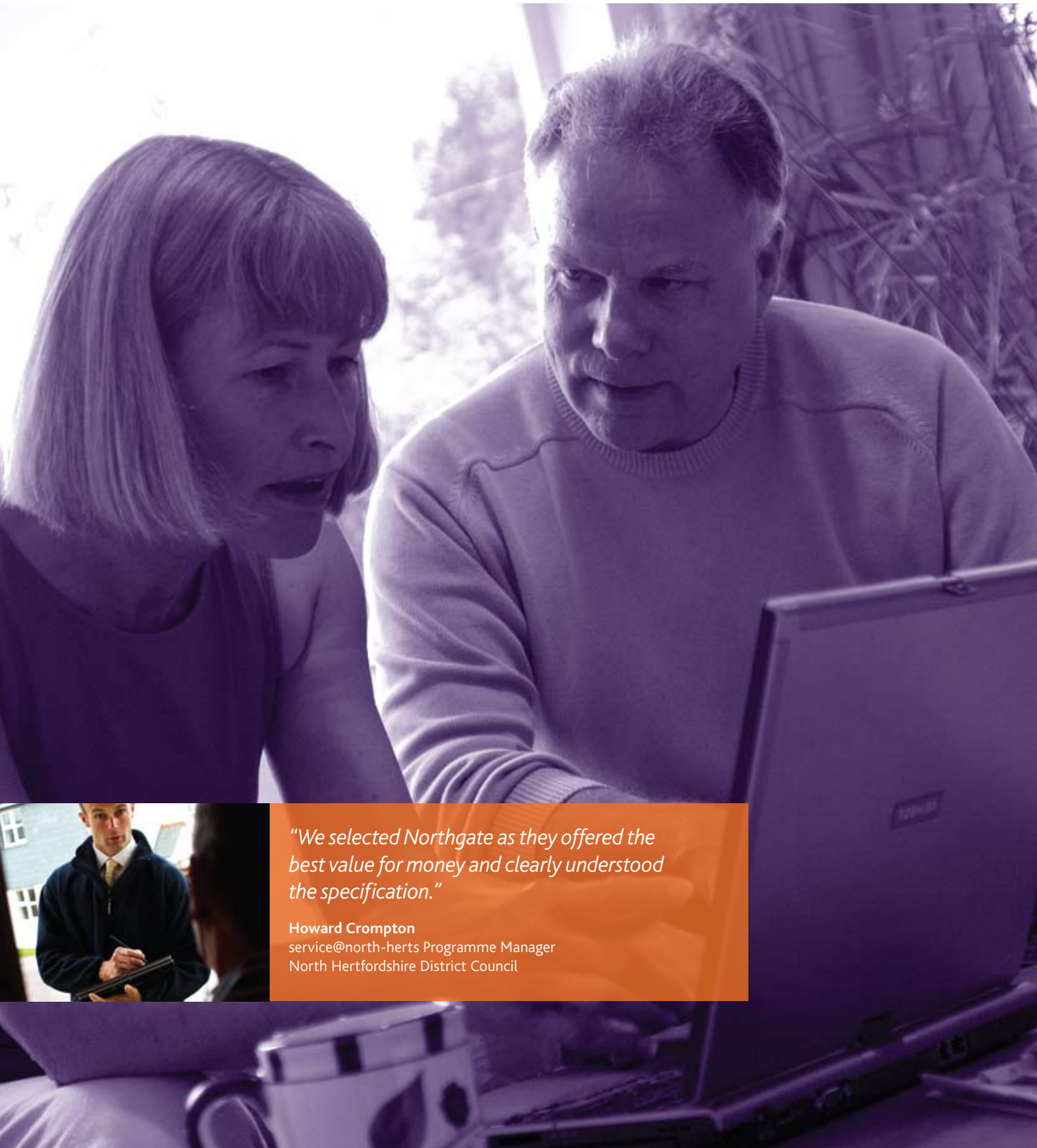


When North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC) initiated the service@north-herts programme, it recognised the need to transform the way it delivered services to customers, as well as the need to improve performance. In the words of Chief Executive John Campbell, "We wanted to create a consistent approach for all customers, regardless of the selected communication channel – face-to-face, phone, e-mail or letter – and offer equality of service at all times." Legislative and management demands were also important considerations. According to Councillor Ian Knighton, who holds the portfolio for e-Government issues, "We also needed to address the e-Government agenda, to introduce up-to-date technologies and make efficiency improvements. This

is very important for elected Members."

A NHDC team created a detailed specification, based on an internal study of what the Council needed to achieve. This defined the required components and became the core of a procurement exercise involving tenders from a number of potential suppliers including Northgate. "We selected Northgate as they offered the best value for money and clearly understood the specification," says Howard Crompton, the Council's Programme Manager. The scope of the solution portfolio was also important: "It means we don't have the hassle of procuring the various solutions separately as we could include them in one all-encompassing contract."

Since the programme's inception, Northgate has been working with NHDC to transform the Council's IT enablement of service delivery. At the heart of the transformation programme has been the provision of core systems to provide a greater customer focus and improved service efficiency. These included the delivery of a new Internet and Intranet as well as the introduction of a CRM system, electronic payment facilities and corporate document and records management. Their introduction will bring about changed working practices across the Council and particularly in the IT department, so a consultancy programme is running throughout the programme's lifetime.



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service@north-herts Programme Manager
North Hertfordshire District Council

As service partner for NHDC, Northgate has delivered a number of strategic and operational assignments to ensure that technology is deployed to best effect. Examples of these initiatives include:

- Provision of a range of strategies and policies to provide governance around IT, including a corporate ICT strategy, integration priorities study and methodology, a security policy, an e-Planning strategy and a mobile working policy;
- The provision of a business process analysis approach that allows the Council to evaluate business processes and determine new working approaches and technology deployment models that enable greater efficiency and service quality;
- Delivery of a Customer Support Centre which includes a CRM and integration to back-office systems
- Roll out of an Enterprise Mobile system to ensure that the Council has a consistent mobile solution in all departments, which in addition to improving the service offered to customers and reducing operating costs, will ensure that support costs are minimised
- Currently implementing a technology platform for the integration of Persons, Property and Asset databases, enabling the alignment of information across many of the Council's customer-facing systems.

Improved Performance

According to Howard Crompton,

"We're looking for benefits in three main areas. First, improved customer service, by taking our services to the customer rather than expecting them to come to us. Second, we anticipated improved performance through no longer relying on the post in processing claims. This is particularly important at the moment as our case load is increasing rapidly due to the present economic climate and as members of the public become more aware of benefit entitlement. We have reduced the average time spent to process a new claim by six days despite an increasing case load and reduced staff resources.

"Finally, we expected to reduce pressure on our own office accommodation by needing fewer people in our offices and by implementing home working during the second year of the project.

This new mobility was developed in parallel with a major overhaul of NHDC's electronic communications. The new Council website will be fully compliant with Government guidance on local authority Internet practice. NHDC will also be providing an end-to-end on-line service for planning.

We currently have home working capability for around 150 staff and this will soon increase as we implement home and mobile working for our Planning & Building Control and Housing & Environmental Health staff.

Home and mobile working is a cornerstone of our office accommodation strategy, which is designed to reduce

our office footprint to enable us to operate out of one main building instead of two and produce revenue savings of around £900K per annum."

Managing Culture Change

The transformation programme has brought considerable change to the Council. Northgate has been central to facilitating this change. At a governance level Northgate has helped NHDC put in place a PRINCE2-based project and programme management process ensuring that projects are defined better and delivered in a more controlled manner. This has given a greater confidence in projects and has shown a much higher level of benefits realisation. At a personal level, Northgate has worked with Council staff to ensure that they understand the new technology and, where possible, are involved in the design of the new processes. Not only do staff feel that they understand the technology but they have a much greater sense of ownership.

John Campbell emphasises the synergies which will multiply the benefits. "By sharing information and integrating systems," he says, "we'll be able to focus the knowledge and expertise of the whole Council on to the specific needs of each customer for a quicker, more relevant and professional service." And it's the relationship with Northgate that he continues to value most: "The main benefit is being able to call on the expertise of a strategic partner in moving the Council forward."

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John Campbell
Chief Executive
North Hertfordshire
District Council

Let's talk

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Northgate clients achieve lower costs, less paperwork, better performance and more joined-up working. Northgate partners over 95% of UK local authorities and every UK police force.

Our technology manages over 40% of the country's social care records, processes over £12 billion of revenues and benefits, drives the electoral administration systems for 18 million people, manages over three million local authority and housing association properties worldwide, supports the national system for reporting police performance and enables real-time monitoring of Britain's roads.

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