Housing Association is at home with new intranet

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Jason McCullagh, Systems Manager, Muir Group

Muir Group Housing Association (Muir Group), was founded in 1968 and are not-for-profit, governed by local people for the benefit of local people. With over 170 employees operating from several UK regional offices, providing nearly 5000 affordable homes and sheltered housing across 33 council districts. They provide nearly 5000 affordable homes supporting their customers with excellent service and creating thriving communities. They also offer sheltered housing for the elderly and supported housing for those who may need additional specific requirements, such as adapted living facilities.
Business Needs

Having previously invested in Microsoft SharePoint 2003, Muir Group were aware of the benefits that the solution could deliver to their business. When the business priority became an improved intranet to assist employee communications and store critical information in a central location, they looked for a key partner who could deliver the project and support them in future developments.

With over 170 employees they were looking to provide flexible working solutions through mobile access to an intranet which would become the main communication tool, provide a critical audit trail, specifically with data protection requirements in mind, and enable them to meet their business strategy of delivering a more responsive, more effective and a better service to their tenants. In addition, they were looking to provide their key strategic partners with a secure platform from which to access specific approved information. They needed a system which stabilised their existing platform and developed into a leading edge intranet and extranet, but also gave them operational resilience and back-up functionality to deliver crucial disaster recovery capability.

Jason McCullagh, Systems Manager at Muir Group explains how it has revolutionised their communications. “Our new intranet now has some fantastic features that our employees love. We have key information in our “Latest News” section which is visual and so is easy to pick out. Our Bulletin Boards enable us to communicate more detailed information and our “live feed” is like our own social media channel, with updates from our employees that are out and about.”

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When Muir Group decided to implement the project, they were looking for a supplier who were able to demonstrate excellent project management capabilities and commence work immediately due to the time critical nature of the implementation. Muir Housing spoke to their contacts within the housing association network and Risual were appointed as a result of recommendations from other IT departments within the industry.

As part of Risual’s customer engagement process, they carried out a thorough health check of the system for Muir and worked hard to comprehensively understand the challenges that Muir faced. They also understood the time critical nature of the project and were able to start work in-line with the client expectations. Risual also recognised that the resilience and disaster recovery capability could be improved and built this in to the solution in order that the client had a robust system both operationally and from an availability perspective. The approach they took was to ensure the environment was delivered to “best practice” standard.

John Pittaway of Risual says, “Muir Group had an existing Microsoft SharePoint solution, but it had become out of date. The Microsoft SharePoint 2010 solutions offered them improved features and functionality, and with our suggestion of some re-architecture work, we were able to provide excellent resilience and meet the business needs for improving communication which has in turn enabled a more efficient way of serving their tenants.”

Jason McCullagh speaks of the relationship with Risual “We were keen to engage with a supplier who were not only experts when it comes to maximising the functionality of the Microsoft products we had, but that could also demonstrate a controlled methodology throughout the project management process and could work with us in a collaborative way. We’ve been really impressed with the excellent support that Risual have already provided and continue to do so with our planned future developments.”
Benefits
Implementing this solution has enabled Muir Group to:

Improve Communication - the new features have enabled Muir Group employees to exchange information quickly, securely and in an auditable way.

Improve Flexibility - As the intranet is fully secure, employees are able to access their information remotely, whether at a tenant’s property or from home which has afforded a more flexible approach to working and resulted in improved employee well-being.

Improve Partner Communication - The new extranet has enabled Muir Housing to communicate critical information with key approved partners in a secure and timely manner which has enhanced their working relationships and collaborative approach.

Audit Control - Audit control is critical especially when dealing with personal data and complying with data protection regulations. It has also improved traceability and ensured that version control delivers the most up to date information and policies.

Business Continuity - With the delivery of improved resilience and disaster recovery, Muir Group are now in a position where their centrally located data can be recovered and they can maintain business continuity in a more manageable way.

Improve end-user productivity - The improved features and functionality has improved the efficiency of the business and the fact that the information is refreshed every five minutes, means that having real time information has saved time, from simple things such as being aware of local traffic to using planned journeys to reduce courier and postage costs.

For more information about this solution or the products and consulting services that risual can offer, contact us on the following or visit our website:

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Microsoft Partner

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