

# Hot property

Gordon Taylor of Wandle Housing Association explains to *Excellence in Leadership* how the use of procurement technology from **Four Business Solutions** has improved organisation and productivity for a busy London housing association.

Wandle Housing Association owns and manages over 5,600 properties in 11 London boroughs including Bromley, Croydon, Lewisham and Wandsworth. The association has a track record of nearly four decades of experience in housing provision.

Wandle takes pride in its careful budget management, crucial for a cost-conscious culture. However, its performance was being hampered by an older and increasingly inflexible purchasing system.

'We manage a large number of transactions,' says IT manager, Gordon Taylor. But, while the association ran its accounting process very efficiently with built-in error handling and consistency measures, the availability of details on the organisation's actual spending position could sometimes hinder the process.

This was mainly because the team was not always able to log data on purchases that had yet to be invoiced. This could sometimes lead to the raising of purchase orders after an invoice arrived, a situation that is never ideal. Taylor believed that if he could better integrate purchasing with the existing back-end accounting platform, staff could more easily track expenditure as it incurred and, at the same time, help senior staff to better manage their budgets.

Wandle made the decision to find a technology solution that was able to work with its own organisational procedures without disrupting the back-end accounting platform, which is SunSystems-based. There was also a very tight timeframe for the go-live date – April, the beginning of the financial year.

Performance has had to be second to none, and of course, it has been



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– with Taylor describing the system's performance as exemplary. Taylor describes one of the benefits of the new iPOS procurement system as its ability to work quickly through the large database of purchase order items in order to find the desired element. However, speed was just one of the requirements. The new system was also tasked to be as user-friendly as possible, thus differentiating itself from the older, unloved system.

'One of the benefits of iPOS over the previous system is the ability to create a template for ordering key items, and for that template to be used to raise invoices for the same amount on a regular basis. We had a real struggle with the old system because people had to re-key information, so there is an awful lot of

time saved from a user's point of view once they are able to raise an order for the same thing, over again, whenever needed,' Taylor says.

Another attraction of the iPOS approach was the ease of integration with the association's existing accounting package. The introduction of iPOS is also helping management to gain more visibility into the current financial state of the business. Taylor adds: 'From a manager's point of view, I can see whether we can afford a suggested new item. For the next financial year everything in the budgets will be placed within iPOS so we'll know exactly how much money we've got to spend – and how much we've spent already.'

The system is being used by a wide variety of staff across the organisation, and it is proving popular. As Taylor comments: 'The system is so flexible, speedy and reliable that people know that when they are going to raise an order they are going to be able to do so quickly.'

For Wandle, the main benefit of the technology is the ease of use when making orders and requisitions, whether they are one-off or repeat in nature. This is aligned with a capacity to bundle up requisitions into a single, more generic order, as well as creating purchasing templates that can be used for recurring items. ■

#### Further information

Four Business Solutions Ltd  
Tel: 0800 625 0025  
Website: [www.four.co.uk](http://www.four.co.uk)