

Kent Fire & Rescue Service relies on *gvas* software to streamline the maintenance management of their 130-strong estate of buildings.

Kent Fire & Rescue Service introduced *gvas* Property Management software to improve works order management relating to their 130 buildings, increase staff productivity and provide an accurate long-term budget forecast



FINANCIAL
OBJECTS

Background

The fire and rescue services in Kent, serving a population of 1.6m people, are delivered by Kent Fire and Rescue Service (KFRS). KFRS comprises 13 district fire safety offices and 66 fire stations, employing over 1,900 full and part time firefighters, across an estate spanning over 25,000m².

Under the Local Government Act of 1999, local authorities are required to continually demonstrate improvements in their service delivery, and Kent Fire & Rescue Service is committed to delivering tangible year on year progress.

Chris Houghton, Sites & Property Manager, Kent Fire & Rescue Service explained: "Governments and communities are requesting increased transparency in public service operations. Every sizeable capital or operational investment including property purchases or repair work must gain shareholder approval. Having a comprehensive system to record this across our extensive property portfolio became critical to our organisation."

The Challenge:

Kent Fire & Rescue Service's 130 properties are widely dispersed across the county and vary in size and age, with the oldest dating back to 1948. Maintaining these in optimum condition relied on feedback from fire station personnel regarding the condition of physical buildings and facilities.

Kent had three main challenges to overcome:

1 *A paper-based, cumbersome order management system*

Division, the property team, receive 1,500 work orders per year via the internal post for them to place the order with local contractors. It frequently took up to a week for the request to

be actioned, as sometimes local priorities took precedence over corporate ones.

2 *The time spent chasing or actioning works orders*

The time required to report, track and complete the work meant that staff were frequently caught up in unnecessary and arduous administrative tasks, being paper- and telephone-based. Staff had started to become increasingly frustrated with the process.

3 *A lack of accurate budgetary information*

The process of budget planning was a manual affair, based largely upon anecdotal information and lacking a formal structure. This meant that it took several weeks to establish the maintenance priorities before it was possible to start the budget building process.

The Solution:

Chris Houghton says, "We selected *gvas* as this product was clearly the best fit in terms of the integrated approach to property and maintenance management, and we knew the Web Requests functionality would improve our process time."

gvas Web Requests allows users to simply log into a web page to input requests for work or status updates. The status of current repair jobs can be checked by searching through the same interface using the corresponding work order ID.

gvas also provides Kent with the ability to receive works orders instantly from the point of origin, to be assessed and disseminated to the appropriate contractors within 24 hours, rather than a week. The maintenance planning features within *gvas* have been designed to improve the budgeting process, with works orders being planned and budgeted for months or years ahead.

Objectives

- Introduce a more efficient method of reporting buildings or works defects
- Reduce the time taken to distribute works orders out to contractors
- Introduce a structure to accurately forecast budgets for future works and measure current expenditure against budget

Solution

- *gvas* Property Manager
- *gvas* Maintenance Manager

Results

- Time from receipt of works order to action – reduced from 7 days to 1 day
- Improved staff morale through empowering individual stations to manage and track their own maintenance requests
- Budgets forecasted for the next 10 years

Benefits

- Improved condition of assets by empowering fire station staff to manage work orders
- Reallocation of property team time to more strategic tasks such as health and safety assessment, process documentation
- Compliance with local authority performance targets and goals



Kent Fire &
Rescue Service

gvas

The software was rolled out in two months, supported by the Financial Objects team. As staff was already familiar with the Windows® look and feel, any re-training was minimal.

The Results:

After a full assessment of the programme one year after implementation, *gvas* and specifically the use of Web Requests has both eliminated the need for telephone calls and reduced the time spent on an individual request by around **eight minutes**.

“Over the course of a year, this will lead to a significant time savings for the helpdesk team,” continues Chris Houghton, “but more importantly, the team can now focus more attention on the core tasks of managing the contractor and end user satisfaction for a timely work completion.

“Within a day, *gvas* enables the work to be submitted to the appropriate contractor having due regard to corporate policy: purchasing and procurement policies, health and safety and asset management best practice.”

The budgets, which were previously held at a local area manager level, have now been centralised to improve control and provide accurate, real-time information on the statuses of expenditure and payments. This level of detail, combined with the maintenance planning functionality within *gvas*, has enabled accurate projected budget forecasts for the next decade.

Chris Houghton also states that by empowering the fire stations to report and track their own maintenance requests, this has led to each fire station feels more accountable for the state of their facility and thus has improved morale.

Overall, by automating some of the operational processes, the property team has been able to dedicate more time to strategic issues such as documenting procedures and improving service level performance. *gvas* has also provided the capability to consolidate the Health and Safety information across the portfolio into one repository, enabling the easy identification and assessment of any potential risks associated with the buildings in care.

“The structure and processes inherent in *gvas* have without a doubt relieved the frustration we previously felt with our old method. We have seen a marked increase in the number of work orders received and repairs carried out, which has subsequently improved our management and therefore the general condition of our assets.”

The Technology:

Kent Fire & Rescue Service prides its self on using state of the art technology to deliver highly valued, cost effective services to its communities.

gvas is a comprehensive, multi-user system that harnesses the latest technologies to deliver a cost effective product that can be used simply and practically by property professionals.

The property team at Kent Fire & Rescue Service uses all *gvas* modules to manage its portfolio of assets, in particular the conditional survey and maintenance planner. These are considered invaluable in administering its ten year maintenance programme.

The Future:

Chris Houghton concluded: “Based on the strength of the results we’re seeing so far, we have no hesitation in developing *gvas* to further improve our position. We plan to integrate *gvas* with our corporate finance system, in accordance with the recommendation of our external auditors. We are working with Financial Objects to automate the payment process for contractor invoices and rent receivables, to reduce the dual-entry which currently takes up much of our time.”

“We will also continue to populate the extensive database provided by *gvas* with more comprehensive details on each of the properties and roll out the web-based work order system to the part time fire stations. We feel confident that our investments in this technology are having a positive effect on the communities we serve and look forward to introducing more features in the future.”