



CROYDON COUNCIL

OFF-SITE STORAGE SOLUTION SAVES COSTS AND SUPPORTS PROPERTY RATIONALISATION

Consolidating document archives with Iron Mountain has enabled Croydon Council to reduce costs by almost 35 per cent while increasing agility through more flexible working

CHALLENGE:

Review information retention policy and reduce document archives to facilitate an office move and accommodate flexible working

SOLUTION:

Off-site records management service with information management consultancy

VALUE:

Streamlined and standardised information management processes, improving information security and compliance at nearly 35 per cent lower unit cost

“Iron Mountain has been a real partner in helping us move to more streamlined ways of working and its contribution was vital to our property rationalisation programme. It’s consistently shown itself to be an information management industry leader through its innovative and collaborative approach.”

Councillor Sara Bashford
Cabinet Member – Corporate and Voluntary Services
Croydon Council

CLIENT

With a workforce of about 10,500 staff, Croydon Council is the largest employer in the London Borough of Croydon. It provides around 75 different services – including housing, planning and benefits system – for local people, businesses and visitors.

As well as its main office at Taberner House in the city centre, Croydon Council had operated from a variety of other locations. As part of an efficiency drive it decided to consolidate all services at a single site, creating a new environmentally-friendly civic centre complex called Bernard Weatherill House.

That change would see 11 council buildings close, saving the local taxpayer more than £2 million a year from reduced property running costs. The move would also free up land for retail, leisure and residential development.

CHALLENGE

To get even greater efficiency the move to the new complex would see the council adopt flexible working arrangements. This meant that rather than having fixed locations, many staff would have hot desks with filing space restricted to less than two linear metres per person. Any long-term documents would need off-site storage.

Croydon Council is a longstanding customer of Iron Mountain for document archive storage, but some departments also held records locally. There would be insufficient space for this practice to continue at Bernard Weatherill House.

Amanda Riggall, Head of Facilities at Croydon Council, says: “The office move was the ideal opportunity for us to review our document retention policy, audit stored papers, set retention dates, dispose of unwanted material, and consolidate the remainder off site with a single vendor.”

The council’s initial audit revealed over 17 million paper records equating to nearly 12 linear kilometres of files, a distance equivalent to that between Taberner House and the Olympic Park at Stratford. It set a target to reduce this by 57 per cent overall and earmarked 39 per cent for off-site storage.

A wide variety of material needed to be archived – from council meeting minutes, financial reports and documents of historical significance to planning applications, environmental reports and child health records. However, not all records held were accurately catalogued, nor were retention dates always sufficiently clear.

CASE STUDY PUBLIC SECTOR UK

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Amanda Riggall
Head of Facilities
Croydon Council

With cost efficiency of paramount importance – and the prospect of needing to store more material off site – the council also wanted to achieve economies of scale and be satisfied that it was paying a fair market price for records management services.

SOLUTION

Following a Cabinet Office-led procurement process, Iron Mountain had been awarded a place as the sole supplier for off-site information management services under Lot 1 of the GPS RM1689 framework. Croydon Council became one of the very first local authorities to benefit.



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Under this agreement local government organisations can benefit from centrally agreed advantageous pricing and commercial terms, without the need for expensive and often time-consuming local procurement exercises. “Iron Mountain also offered to help us develop our information retention policy based on best practice, as well as assist with our data cleanse project in collaboration with our other service suppliers as one team working together,” confirms Amanda Riggall.

The initial focus was on application of the new document retention policy and the transfer of centralised onsite records to Iron Mountain off-site storage. Boxes were catalogued and transported from council offices, typically at a rate of around 250 per day. Moreover, as a result of the review and consolidation exercise around 4,000 boxes of files deemed to be of no further value were securely destroyed by Iron Mountain.

The next priority was to help council employees review the continued need for local records in light of the much reduced capacity to hold files in the minimalist environment of the new building. Amanda Riggall says: “Iron Mountain suggested new ways of storing and accessing our documents as well as being a key part of our in-house ‘store-it, scan-it, scrap-it’ days, promoting a change of culture towards improved information management.”

To assist council staff with the decision-making process Iron Mountain provided a thought tree, reflecting recommendations from the Information and Records Management Society. Certain document types are now routinely scanned and stored electronically, with the originals either destroyed or catalogued and boxed for long term off-site storage with Iron Mountain.

Iron Mountain also helped the council upgrade from a manual to a fully computerised management system, developing an electronic transmittal sheet, now available via the council

intranet, to allow people to catalogue documents and place a request for collection and off-site storage.

VALUE

By consolidating its records with Iron Mountain, Croydon Council has streamlined and standardised its information management processes, improved information security and reduced cost. “Moving to the GPS framework reduced the unit cost of box storage by almost 35 per cent and we are benefitting from additional ongoing savings following the destruction of unwanted files,” reports Amanda Riggall.

In the event, Croydon Council’s achievements reducing its paper archive was all the more impressive. Amanda Riggall adds: “Even more files emerged from cupboards and under desks, so we actually securely disposed of almost 24 linear kilometres of files, enough for the round trip to the Olympic Park!”

Council records are now better organised and securely stored yet remain easily accessible, making it more straightforward for the council to, for example, comply with freedom of information requests within prescribed timescales. Moreover, all records have been re-catalogued and now have destruction dates assigned, simplifying the future inventory management challenge.

Document storage and retrieval requests are processed via the council’s outsourced administration services team, which has been trained to use IM Connect, the Iron Mountain customer portal. There is a weekly collection of new records for storage and daily delivery of retrieved files as required.

Councillor Sara Bashford, Cabinet Member – Corporate and Voluntary Services at Croydon Council, sums up: “Iron Mountain has been a real partner in helping us move to more streamlined ways of working and its contribution was vital to our property rationalisation programme. It’s consistently shown itself to be an information management industry leader through its innovative and collaborative approach.”

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