Rev Bens Alpha Project

Summary

Sedgemoor developed a cloud business rates platform with the intent of releasing it as Open Source. Teignbridge and Leeds are amongst the councils that are interested in migrating to this new platform. In order to do that it was needed to explore the feasibility of migrating data while also answering if it covers the same functionality they currently have on their systems.
It was also part of this project to investigate what model could be used to support the new system as well as exploring what customers both internal and external have to say about the current system and the interaction with the council to find opportunities of improvement.

Technical Workstream

What was done?
The objective was to create a new instance of the SOCCS system in Azure, import the Gazetteer data and migrate data from Leeds business rates system and test the SOCCS rest API.

How did we do it?
Close collaboration with people in Leeds and Sedgemoor, consulted with Revs and Bens experts on Leeds to understand the data model from Capita.
Used Azure Data Factory to transform CVS files into tables and then extract and convert the data to be pumped into a SQL database.
Used Swagger UI to call SOCCS Rest API's

What we've achieved/learnt?

- Deployed the Azure infrastructure and automated the process via ARM templates
- Mapped data from Leeds to SOCCS - Minimum Data
- Imported the Gazetteer
- Migrated what was defined the minimum data set with Azure Data Factory and provided the documentation
- Tested SOCCS API's

What else is left to do?

- Continue with the import of data exercise
- Develop the screen that queries the API's to mimic My rates functionality.
- Reach out to other councils that use Capita's Revs and Bens to test that the migration documentation is applicable.
- Export BACS file

User Research Workstream

What was done?

Explored the key challenges and opportunities for business rate users

How did we do it?

We conducted in- depth telephone and video interviews with those who manage and pay business rates. These were a range of users including those that manage business rates of one or multiple properties in one local authority. Through agents or those that manage payments over many authorities in the UK.

What we've achieved/learnt?

We have identified from these conversations the main pain points and opportunities to improve:

- Users want to be able to see the status of queries that they submit. (E.g. not having to follow up on email by phone)
- Users want to be able to see and understand any changes in re-issued bills (In some cases this information isn't included)
- Users want to be able to request refunds quickly and easily
- Users manage multiple licences and/or multiple authorities want to be able to export key bits of billing information into other systems.

What else is left to do?

- Usability testing of the Sedgemoor system (TBC)
- Decision on priority of final UR recommendations (to be added to backlog)

Governance Workstream

What was done?

Explore what type of licence is better suited for the project, what models are available for governance and what are the costs and how it could be funded.

How did we do it?

Conducted interviews with BlueBadge, Local Gov Drupal and DxW and software vendors. Investigated models being applied on well established open source communities like the Linux Foundation and used Sedgemoor team structure to predict costs.

What we've achieved/learnt?

We have provided recommendations on:

- Use a copyleft type open source licence such as GPL V3,
- Roles that are needed for the maintenance and development of the system.
- Described 4 governance models
- Core team options
- Costs & Funding.

What else is left to do?

- Establish the steering group
- Confirm the open source licence to be used and publish the code
- Grow the community.