

# ProcessFlows' SMS Solution Saves Valuable Time at Babergh District Council

## The Customer:

Babergh District Council is based in the market town of Hadleigh, placing it centrally within the prosperous and attractive district in the southern part of Suffolk it represents. The district is predominantly rural, yet is within easy commuting distance to London.

The Council aims to respect and protect its unique heritage and environment whilst addressing change where this is beneficial to residents and the district, plus providing a community leadership which recognises that everybody matters and which encourages and supports strong and inclusive communities.

## The Challenge:

Babergh Council wanted to find a modern, cost effective and easier method of keeping in touch with its residents and in particular, where possible, to engage the younger members of the community. They identified text messaging as an easy and unobtrusive communication tool which offered greater penetration across the district than either home or publicly accessed PCs and it was popular with the younger generation. It would hopefully open up new lines of communication with this section of the community, as well as saving valuable officer hours.

The solution needed to operate through an email interface, be easy to install and simple to use so that it would quickly be embraced by council personnel and recipients, plus it needed to meet regulatory compliance initiatives.

## The Solution:

A pilot text messaging system trial, using ProcessFlows Text Message Server was implemented and used in the first instance to deliver local election results to members of the press.

Developed by ProcessFlows, Text Message Server is a fully-featured inbound and outbound communications solution. Text messages can be created, sent and received from within any email client and third party software such as CRM, ERP and Web, with enterprise reports and developers tools kits.

Information on newly-elected councilors was sent through text messages to journalists and broadcasters – saving officer time, hours on the telephone and improving the service provided.

Bob Southgate, Babergh's Head of Customer Services, said: *"Text messaging is an effective and modern way of communicating. Most people have a mobile phone and it is no longer a gimmick but a real help in a busy world. By launching this system, Babergh is hoping to communicate with even more of its customers, while keeping the traditional methods open, to allow for greater access to our services."*

**The system is being used for a number of different projects, both internal and external, all designed to save time and improve efficiency:**

- A travel alert service to try and alleviate the amount of time visiting council officers waste sitting in traffic jams.
- Internal communication with caretakers, so they do not waste time returning to base to be sent straight out again.
- Transferring information or messages to Officers in the Council's Property Management Team, who regularly need to switch between internal and external duties.
- Reminding citizens of appointments with the local Citizen's Advice Bureau for debt advice a few days in advance to increase the number of kept appointments.
- Builders and house owners are able to request and arrange building inspections by text and the system is also being used to contact residents to remind them to pay their Council Tax.



## The Benefits:

Now rolled out across south Suffolk, the use of text messaging is expanding. Marketing texting as the modern way to communicate with your council has had unforeseen knock on effects – the more senior residents are now embracing texting as a routine method of communication, encouraged by their younger friends, allowing the council to further engage with these often hard to reach groups of people.

Babergh Council reports real quantifiable cost savings as a result of the ProcessFlows solution. *"Text messages are more instantaneous and allow a greater flexibility for the person receiving them. The potential for numerous worker hours saved is enormous, coupled with money savings - the cost of a second class stamp is 24p, a text charge is 6p."* said Bob Southgate.

Plans are also under way to use SMS technology for Emergency Planning processes. *"Texting is quick and accurate, plus it gives us a complete audit trail, essential for this scenario"* said Bob Southgate.

*"We plan to use SMS to empower our 'Litter Champions' across the 76 parishes that make up the district"* said Bob.

*"These Champions will use text messaging as the preferred method to report fly-tipping, abandoned vehicles, graffiti etc to the relevant departments, which means damage, will be able to be assessed and action decisions made before visiting the site".*

