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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CHP MAKES LIGHT WORK OF HOUSING FILES

CHP is one of over 2000 housing organisations throughout the UK which exist to provide affordable housing to rent and buy. Working closely with residents and various statutory and charitable agencies, its purpose is to constantly improve the situation of those looking for housing by delivering a choice of homes and services that are affordable and of improving quality.

CHP's house files had always been maintained in a paper based system but, as their scope had grown, so had the potential benefits of having these files and documents stored in digital format. An increasing number of their staff now worked on the road or remotely, so having a system that would allow secure remote access to the information would be hugely beneficial. Equally, having information on both residents and their properties at their fingertips in a single location would help to develop and improve the customer service they could provide at the first point of contact for their customers.

The issue of the space these files took up had also been clearly highlighted during preparations for a move to new offices, with a large percentage of the interim location having to be turned over to storing the files. The move had also given a vivid reminder of the impact on the organisation should anything happen to the files, with difficult to replace information being lost forever. However, holding them in a digitally would mean they could instantly be recovered with a minimal impact on the running of their business.

The arguments were overwhelming in favour of digitising these key documents but there was still the question of finding the right partner to carry out the work of scanning and indexing them. Of all the companies considered, Preview shone in two areas of key importance to CHP. Firstly, the need to adhere to a strict deadline due to their imminent move and, secondly, special indexing requirements using specific metadata before importing them into CHP's central Sharepoint system. Due to the additional capacity added over the course of 2008 to manage the increasing demand for their services, Preview had both the resources to meet those tight timescales and deliver an excellent solution for the indexing.

CHP's initial focus centred on the house files covering the period since 2002 with these being split into two main sections: firstly, there was paperwork which related to the property itself and then all of the documentation regarding the residents. Both sets of information needed to be scanned and indexed with a reference number taken from their housing system and have additional metadata associated with each record to help future indexing and retrieval.

To ensure that the metadata was successfully associated with the documents during the scanning process, Preview created a solution where barcodes were placed on the document folders and the metadata taken from CHP's own housing system was supplied on a spreadsheet. This meant that the two could be automatically matched during scanning, both increasing the volume of metadata that could be applied and minimising any errors.

The output was a pdf image of the document which made it exceptionally easy to view and use the information. In addition, OCR was also carried out on the files and the key metadata attached to them - this means that searching for and locating individual files after they are indexed is both quick and straightforward. All of this information was then pulled together to be uploaded into CHP's central Sharepoint system.

As Kevin Darby, IT Manager at CHP explained, "The project has proven just how much can be done once you have files in a format where they can be stored and shared online. It has already had a positive impact in a number of areas and we are identifying additional benefits and ways to use this facility on a regular basis."

About Preview Services

Preview Services Limited (www.previewservices.com) is a specialist provider of outsourced document management services to businesses and public organisations of all sizes. Clients include major sales and leasing companies, airlines, engineering firms and government agencies.

Based in Feltham, Middlesex the Company operates one of the UK's leading document scanning bureaux and is developing innovative and cost saving solutions for document management.

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