

► Written By **Barry Tuckwood, Valuebill Programme Manager & Brenda Soars, Valuebill Project Co-ordinator**

say no to silos!

Valuebill, one of the 22 Local e-Government National Projects has proven that e-Government can yield much for innovative Local Authorities

Reflect for a moment on how many databases your organisation has - there are probably over 40 containing separately maintained property data; then ask why?

- The property data component should be the same across all of them - but is it?
- Time, effort and resource could be saved with just one flexible and accurate database for use organisation-wide - efficient and effective
- An example of being joined-up, at the core of service delivery

With just one organisation-wide property database you'd be making best use of resources, freeing-up staff to concentrate on other key roles, simplifying and standardising processes in the back office, enhancing your frontline delivery by reducing time spent in accessing and verifying address-based data and much more. All very Gershon, but how?

IMPROVING VALUATION SERVICES

Valuebill, one of the 22 Local e-Government National Projects, establishes the electronic exchange of information between local authority billing agencies, the Valuation Office Agency (VOA), and the National Land and Property Gazetteer (NLPG) - improving valuation services for citizens and businesses. It is also assisting the integration of billing authorities (BA) and VOA into the wider land-related initiatives in local and central government.

The principle elements of Valuebill are:

- Ensure that the property data meets the requirements for Revenues, with the result that it also meets wider needs
- Data match of Local Authority (LA) data to Local Land and Property Gazetteer (LLPG), then to NLPG and VOA
- Creation of a new field in the VOA database for the NLPG Unique Property Reference Number (UPRN), which relates to each billable unit within Council Tax/Non Domestic Rates (CT/NDR)
- Enable data exchange
- Electronic data exchange within LAs and with the VOA using XML schema
- XML schema incorporated by application suppliers
- Data collection and maintenance
- Modified internal procedures for data collection and maintenance to ensure that it is kept up to date

The UPRN is the key as it provides a unique reference for each unit, whether it is an individual

VALUEBILL PARTNERS

Pilot LAs

- London Borough of Newham
- Corporation of London
- Derwentside DC
- East Riding of Yorkshire
- Huntingdonshire DC
- South Gloucestershire
- Staffordshire Moorlands DC
- Tandridge DC
- Tynedale DC

Government Agencies:

- Valuation Office Agency
- Greater London Authority
- Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA)

Land and Property systems suppliers

including: Academy, Anite; Caps Solutions; Civica; Comino; IBS (Public Services); MIS; MVM; Sx3

Trade and Professional Associations:

- Institute of Revenues, Rating and Valuations (IRRV)
- Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS)

Other Partners: NLPG

office in a multi-storey block, a flat or a bus shelter - all the people using this reference can be assured they're talking about the same property.

HIGH YIELD

As one of six National Projects selected to take part in the benefits studies carried out for ODPM by Capgemini in 2004, Valuebill has proven that e-Government can yield much for innovative Local Authorities (LAs). Highlights include:

- enhanced Revenue collection services
- more accurate billing
- speedier property valuation
- improved staff effectiveness
- enhanced transparency of information
- improved CRM
- cleansed property data for use organisation-wide and beyond, for example, emergency services, NLIS.

To realise the benefits:

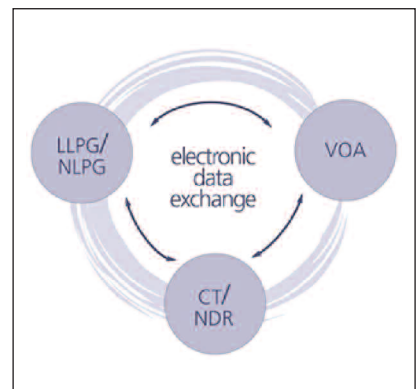
- Think corporate; the benefits are across the organisation for all projects
- Set and monitor targets
- Use cross-functional teams - say No to Silos
- Brainstorm the benefits

HOW TO DO VALUEBILL

You need: Software; LLPG; Facility for Updating; Commitment

THE STEPS TO VALUEBILL

1. DATA MATCHING
 - a. Obtain data sets from NLPG including unmatched records
 - b. Review lookup tables against LLPG, CT and NDR
 - c. Confirm mismatches
 - d. Resolve with appropriate people inc VOA
2. DATA QA AND CONTINUANCE
 - a. Verify
 - b. Enable regular updates of NLPG from LLPG (Many do this already)
 - c. Add UPRNs into local datasets (need application update?)
3. BUSINESS CHANGE
 - a. Create and agree business procedures for internal exchange and maintenance of property address data; and appropriate management controls
4. DATA TRANSFER
 - a. Enable internal electronic updates
 - b. Enable electronic transfer with VOA



- Change the processes
 - Combine projects to share work
 - With complex projects implement a bit at a time
- Several Valuebill pilots are enjoying 100 per cent data match across CTAX and NDR. A pilot of new cleansing routines developed in partnership with NLPG and the VOA now means new LAs could start with around an 84 per cent match on NDR. >>

>> TECHNICAL ASPECTS

The operational exchange of information between LAs and the Valuation Office Agency is a crucial element of Valuebill - it provides a transformation. The Project's recommended way of exchanging information is by using schemata that define requirements for communication to other appropriate data sets and any VOA developments will be based on this.

These schemata to support XML data transfer protocols have been developed to allow transfer of information to evolve to a more efficient, sophisticated exchange and will hence allow for a staged migration from the initial email attachments through to full electronic exchange. The schemata comply with e-Gov interoperability requirements (e-GIF) and the design also allows for transition from the current relatively unstructured use of address data through to progressive development of the gazetteer and its use for referencing through to fully referenced data and compliance with BS7666 (the British standard for property data) - as shown in the Potential Information Flows and Future Process diagrams below. A combination of structured address data and the Unique Property Reference Number (UPRN) to support property identification are the primary identifiers throughout.

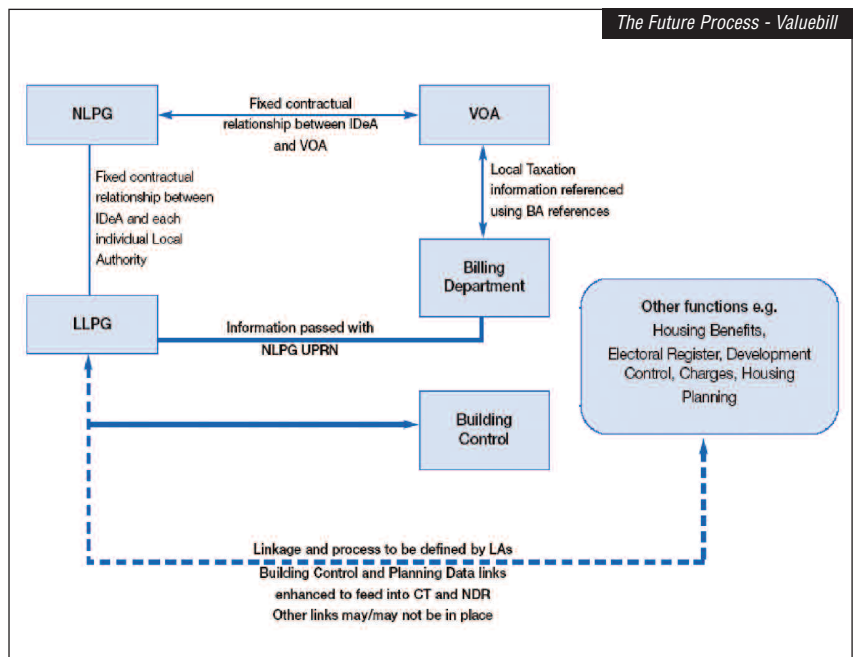
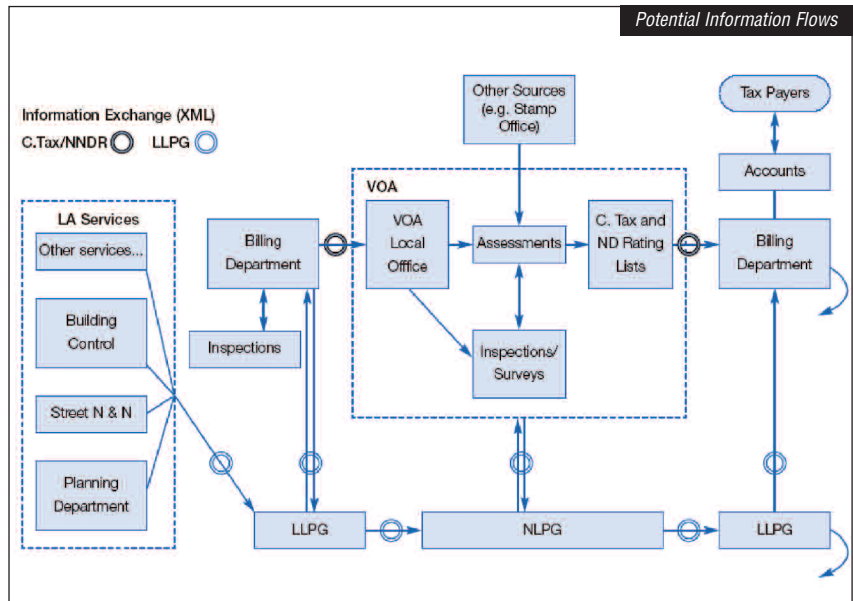
A web based 'Outbox' mechanism is already in place at the VOA and the next step is to develop a web portal for uploading BA reports, which is planned for Autumn 2005. The current process is a 2-weekly cycle, but schemata are designed to handle more frequent transmission - weekly, daily or individual record level straight to VOA.

More co-ordination between departments is leading to benefits all round in the Valuebill pilot Authorities. Just one example is East Riding of Yorkshire Council (ERYC), which heralds Valuebill as the key to many of its initiatives. A GIS-enabled LLPG has been 'live' on desktops organisation-wide, including schools, for over 18 months. Enhanced by Valuebill, it incorporates all cross references, business/house names, UPRNs, plotted plans and much more. The latest development enabled by the cleansed LLPG is 'The Data Observatory' - a web-based resource of demographic, social, economic and environmental information presented graphically or spatially.

"At the outset it was determined that a Humber-wide Data Observatory would enable registered users to access a common source of data to better inform strategies, planning for business, crime awareness and prevention, democracy, deprivation, health, learning and local labour issues in the East Riding of Yorkshire." Brad Webster Research Group Manager ERYC.

The Education Directorate at ERYC is also about to replace its current database with the LLPG - "yet another big step in the right direction," enthuses LLPG Officer at ERYC, Marilyn George.

Huntingdonshire DC, another pilot LA that



shares many applications authority-wide, enjoys increased visibility through GIS where an on-screen display reveals whether properties are paying NDR or CTAX.

MORE TO OFFER

Valuebill has much to offer wider land-related initiatives too. Charles Partridge, Director, Lambert Smith Hampton says: "The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors has made it clear that a property tax should be fair, based upon up-to-date values and upon accurate property data. Existing methods of data capture are notoriously ineffective and the ratepayer is entitled to the confidence that all properties are included in the appropriate rating lists at their correct value. Implementation of the Valuebill project, coupled with the use of UPRNs and the NLPG/LLPG project should ensure that these criteria are met in way which is transparently fair."

For well-informed, contented staff to provide an efficient service to happier Citizens - Valuebill is the foundation. Provide and use joined-up data. Join the innovators and say no to silos.

The 22 National Projects funded by the ODPM's Local e-Government programme help local authorities e-enable priority services in ways that customers will use.

The next round of National Project Experience Sharing Workshops, in which Valuebill is presenting a full-day session, are currently taking place around the country, plus there's a 2-day Local e-Gov EXPO taking place on 20 - 21 April. For full details and to register see the National Projects Website www.localgovnp.org.uk.

Key Valuebill products including the Starter Kit, schemata, address matching process and case studies can be downloaded from the website www.newham.gov.uk/valuebill.