

Outsourced Bill Validation Service

Cornwall Council is one of the largest employers in Cornwall and is committed to leading the way in the UK's action on climate change. With the help of TEAM's Outsourced Bill Validation Service, the authority has saved more than £538,000 over the last five years.



TEAM Bureau now receives all of the authority's gas, electricity and water bills. More than 1,300 invoices are validated every month and where appropriate, overcharges are recovered from the Council's suppliers.

Vikki is kept informed of all activity undertaken by TEAM; for example; which invoices need to be paid, which are being withheld and which are in dispute.

In October 2016, TEAM and Cornwall were in the process of challenging 191 open queries with various suppliers, with potential savings of £87,288.50.

Vikki adds: "I'm always kept up-to-date with what's going on and any queries I have are always dealt with in a timely manner and followed up with a phone call or email."

The utility invoices go through a rigorous validation process before being approved for payment and sent electronically to the Council's finance system.

Overview

Cornwall Council provides a wide range of services to more than half a million Cornish residents.

In 2014, it had an annual budget of more than £1 billion and was the biggest employer in Cornwall with a staff of 12,429 salaried workers.

Over the last three years, the authority has reduced its CO₂ emissions by 4% per year.

TEAM Bureau

Cornwall Council began working with TEAM Bureau (Outsourced Bill Validation Service) in 2011.

Vikki Wilkins, Energy Management Technician, at Cornwall Council explains where it all began.

She said: "The council's energy management team consists of just myself and I didn't have time to go through and check hundreds of utility bills every month. The Council required someone with the skills and capacity like TEAM to provide an outsourced bill validation and cost recovery service, which would allow me to concentrate on other energy projects."



Vikki Wilkins
 Energy Management Technician
 Cornwall Council

Savings

With the help of TEAM Bureau, Cornwall Council identified a major water leak and savings of some £20,000 per year.

TEAM informed the authority, that Hayle Library, one of its sites, had been using an extortionate amount of water.

In August 2015, the usage was recorded at 859m³, this then increased to a reading of 5845m³ in March 2016.

Vikki said: "Without the help of TEAM Bureau this water leak could have gone undetected for a lot longer. The fact that they alerted me to the possibility of a water leak meant that I could get our contractors out to site and investigate. It's saved us a lot of money."

The highest ever single saving recorded for Cornwall Council by TEAM is £24,569.10, from historic incorrect meter reads.

TEAM raised the query when a supplier provided an invoice with an interim estimated read of 167480, which exceeded the original reading provided to TEAM (and supplier) of 143083 from Cornwall.

"Without TEAM this money would never have been recuperated because I just don't have the time to check and validate all the utility invoices that we receive. We've saved ourselves so much money from billing errors, because of TEAM," added Vikki.



Sigma Energy Viewer

Cornwall Council has successfully adopted one of TEAM's latest software developments – the Sigma Energy Viewer.

Sigma Energy Viewer is an easy-to-use browser based software system which provides a quick overview of site and energy billing data. The software allows large multi-site organisations to share energy data with site contacts and enable them to enter meter readings, view bills and analyse data.

Vikki explains: "I needed a tool to help me delegate the energy responsibility to site level. I was spending a week each month entering site recorded meter reads, which was taking up too much of my time."

Sigma Energy Viewer allows site based teams to enter meter reads directly to TEAM. They can also view energy profiles and see if there have been any unusual usage patterns. It has now been introduced across all of the Council's sites including children's centres, corporate buildings and leisure centres.

"It required very little training, I did it all over the telephone. It's a very simple tool and I like that fact that the 'not so technically minded' can use it at ease. I have had very positive feedback from sites, it's a wonderful tool," added Vikki.

Future Plans

Going forward the council wants to make sure sites have the skills and tools to control operational energy in their buildings, so it will be providing training on energy awareness.

Vikki said: "We want to raise awareness and keep site managers up-to date with energy saving ideas and tips on how to monitor energy usage more efficiently. Sigma Energy viewer will allow them to understand the energy usage profile for their sites which will inform their actions."

She added: "Working with TEAM has allowed me to concentrate on other energy saving projects. I'm more than happy with the work that they provide and I would definitely recommend them to others in my position."



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