

Birmingham City Council

Removing the boundaries to elections success for Europe's largest local authority



Deliverables at-a-glance

- » Transformed a typically complex and manual process with innovation and automation
- » Successfully conducted the largest-scale boundary change ever likely to be faced by an authority in Europe
- » Completed required boundary changes in under 30 minutes, as opposed to months
- » Delivered a scalable and flexible solution with the ability to support other local authorities and electoral requirements in the future

Challenge: Ensuring fair, equal and representative voting with boundary changes

Following an independent operational review in 2014, Birmingham City Council (BCC) identified the need for a major boundary overhaul. With publication planned for 1 December 2017, the changes aimed to ensure voting remained representative of the area and involved reducing the size of wards to make them predominantly single member seats.

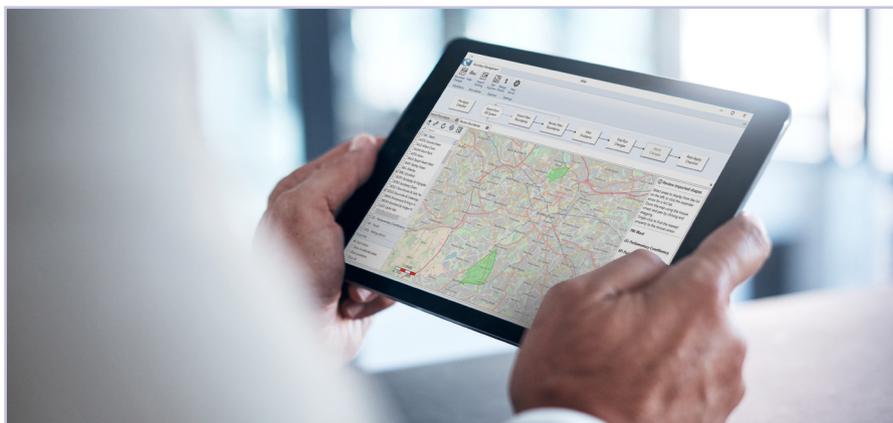
However, for electoral teams, the process of manual boundary change is a lengthy, resource-intensive and error-prone activity – especially in this instance, given BCC's size and scope. Therefore, the Council approached Idox Elections to develop an automated solution that would help it action the planned changes in a timely manner, while also ensuring a smooth transition.

Solution: Introducing automation and simplicity to boundary reviews

Fully piloted and proven, Idox Elections' Atlas solution enables local authorities to process rapid boundary changes and introduces simplicity to what has historically been a complex and time-consuming task.

By implementing the product, BCC was able to:

- » Know precisely where properties are situated based on their geographic coordinates;
- » Use a 'shape file' to identify the precise location of the new boundaries and determine what needs to move;
- » Check the new boundaries on a map and correct any problems;
- » Perform a trial-run; and
- » Conduct the changes for 'live' and perform further checks.



“Thanks to Idox’s innovative technology, we were able to complete the entire boundary overhaul in just 26 minutes. Everything was moved successfully, old wards disappeared, no staff time was spent on manual tasks, and minimal checking was required afterwards.”

Robert Connelly
Head of Electoral Services
& Deputy Monitoring Officer
Birmingham City Council

As the software allows councils of any size to review their localities visually and spatially on an interactive map, the solution eliminates the manual processes typically involved in boundary overhauls, delivering the speed, accuracy and flexibility needed to ensure successful completion.

Outcome: Boundary transformation in minutes rather than months

Across 740,000 electors and 430,000 properties, Atlas successfully conducted the largest-scale boundary change ever likely to be faced by an authority in Europe.

BCC benefitted from:

- » **Reform:** transforming from 40 to 69 wards, and moving properties and streets in less than 30 minutes – usually a six-month activity.
- » **Review:** facilitated team-working to test and visually check all changes before going live, ensuring accuracy.
- » **Reallocate:** as minimal resource is required to action the changes, staff could be reallocated to work on other areas, driving productivity.

Robert Connelly, Head of Electoral Services & Deputy Monitoring Officer at BCC said:

“Thanks to Idox’s innovative technology, we were able to complete the entire boundary overhaul in just 26 minutes. Everything was moved successfully, old wards disappeared, no staff time was spent on manual tasks, and minimal checking was required afterwards.

“We can confidently say that none of this would have been possible in such a short space of time without the Idox solution. They’ve managed to create a product that distils a process from months to minutes, and provided the technology needed to help us easily action further changes in the future.”

Future: Boundary review and beyond

While the solution has been developed in collaboration with BCC, its scalability means authorities across the UK can – and are – deriving benefits from it.

Although its primary use has focused on boundary changes, the solution is being flexed further to accommodate processes such as canvass area optimisation, automated staff allocation at polling stations, reviews and division of districts.