



## How Surrey Heath Borough Council uses CoStar Suite to increase their efficiency

*85 UK Local Authorities currently subscribe to CoStar Suite to track their commercial property market, quickly respond to business enquiries, monitor the competition and foster internal collaboration between their Planning, Estates and Regeneration departments.*

*CoStar spoke to Kevin Cantlon,  
Economic Development Officer at Surrey Heath*

*“Now we’ve got the whole Borough at our fingertips”*

Kevin Cantlon, Economic Development Officer

## Who they are:

Rallying under the banner of ‘Open for Business’, Surrey Heath Borough Council is committed to creating new employment opportunities and enhancing prosperity in the Borough.

The Council’s Economic Development team provides the information, advice, guidance and practical support needed to attract inward investment and make it easy for companies to start up and move into Surrey Heath.

## How CoStar Suite helps them:

CoStar Suite provides them with online access to commercial property current availability, comparable evidence for valuations, tenants, and lease data including lease breaks and reviews.

Access to the product is shared between the Economic Development, Business Rates and Corporate Property departments.

## An Interview with Kevin Cantlon

**CoStar:** Are you facing tougher challenges these days?

Kevin Cantlon: Like other Local Authorities, Surrey Heath has had to become more business-focused, more proactive. The recession has taught us that.

This is where CoStar Suite really proves its worth. Its daily alerts keep us right up to date on property news and developments. Then its huge data resource enables us to provide a fully detailed picture of the market to enterprises interested in locating here.

**CoStar:** You’re responding more comprehensively to commercial enquirers. How does that benefit them – and the Council?

KC: Because we share a platform with the commercial property agents, communications and the working relationship are better. That means that we can provide all the information needed by businesses thinking about moving into or around the Borough. They can then get in touch with the relevant agent without delay.

Obviously this increases the likelihood they’ll choose Surrey Heath.

**CoStar:** Attracting new businesses into the area is one thing. Retaining them is another?

KC: Yes, and retention is vital, especially when local companies expand and look to relocate. CoStar Suite has given us the technology to present those businesses with property options right here inside the Borough – complete with all the details they need to make a decision. Plus, the simple fact that we have all this information on tap shows our business community that we value their presence and are very keen for them to stay.

**CoStar:** Does CoStar help make the most of your time?

KC: It certainly saves a lot of shoe-leather! Back in the day, there was no alternative to visiting sites in person – quite a task when you’ve got 37 square miles to cover. Now, with CoStar on my desk, I have the whole Borough at my fingertips.

**CoStar:** Did you face a steep learning curve when you first started using CoStar Suite?

KC: Not really. CoStar trained all our users, giving each of them an individualised, one-to-one session. That got us up to speed quickly, and we've had all the support we need since then.

On top of that, we swap hints and advice between us on a daily basis while we get to know all the things CoStar Suite can do.

**CoStar:** So CoStar is used by different departments of the Council?

KC: Yes – we have three CoStar Suite licences, for Economic Development, Business Rates and Corporate Property. Sharing the CoStar platform helps us to run a more joined-up operation, and speeds up processes all round.

For example, I can let our Business Rates people know immediately a property is occupied. By doing that, they are able to pick up premises that have not yet been assessed for commercial rates.

Once they are alerted, they send in their inspectors and make sure the property is rated correctly and starts paying what's due. That's an obvious revenue gain for us.

**CoStar:** Because Councils now get to keep a share of rates collected?

KC: Exactly. The business rates retention scheme, introduced in 2013, gives us fifty percent of rates collected. That's a seriously motivating figure! It means we're keener than ever to fill all our commercial premises and get them properly rated. CoStar Suite is a key tool to help us do both those things better. It was really the main reason we subscribed in the first place.

**CoStar:** You mentioned Corporate Property. How do they use CoStar Suite?

KC: For them, the most valuable benefit of the system is to keep them fully aware of the property scene in our area. Asking prices, completed leases, rental yields – the information provided by CoStar Suite is impressively comprehensive.



*“CoStar Suite is a key tool in filling all our commercial premises and getting them properly rated.”*



## CoStar case study: Surrey Heath Borough Council

Compiling all that data used to be very time-consuming, and a distraction from more productive work. Now they have all they need to maximise their revenue and stay competitive, right there on screen.

### CoStar: How about costs?

KC: Cost was never really an issue. We found the CoStar Suite subscription fee very reasonable. And with three licences distributed between three different departments, the cost per function is even lower. And that's not to mention the revenue gains we expect to make by using all the capabilities of CoStar.

### CoStar: Across the Council – development, business rates, corporate property – has CoStar lived up to your expectations?

KC: Yes, it has. We'll be looking at hard figures later this year, but I am pretty certain it has paid for itself already. My colleagues share this view.

The fact is, even one new property paying commercial rates should be enough to pay for a year's CoStar subscription.

**Kevin Cantlon** is Economic Development Officer at Surrey Heath Borough Council, where he leads and implements the Council's commitment to supporting and working with enterprises in the region. He identifies his main challenge to be meeting the demands of businesses that expect a lot, work to very tight timescales and sometimes find public sector processes difficult to understand.



**You do your job with ever decreasing resources so you need the best tools available.**

**That's why 85 UK Local Authorities have chosen CoStar Suite to:**

- **Save time researching the market**
- **Attract and retain businesses in their area.**
- **Maximise the council's assets and portfolio**
- **Effectively connect with local agents and tenants**
- **Justify their planning decisions and produce**
- **Enhance inter-departmental collaboration**

**Contact us to find out who else in your area is using CoStar Suite and how your Council could benefit from it.**

**Call 020 3205 4600  
email [sales@costar.co.uk](mailto:sales@costar.co.uk)  
or visit [www.costar.co.uk](http://www.costar.co.uk)**