

How Harrow

transformed its parking services in partnership with Civica



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As part of a wider transformation programme that has saved Harrow Council in North West London £45 million over the last three years, the local authority wanted to apply the process of achieving strong efficiency gains in other departments to revolutionise its parking services.

Using a combination of innovative technology from Civica and an ambitious approach from a management team with no direct parking experience, Harrow Council has overhauled its parking services administration and in doing so, provided a new model that will be of interest to other councils.

As a council, Harrow issues more than 110,000 penalty charge notices (PCNs) per year. As a result of the new technology and processes in place, it has reduced overall staff costs by 30% as well as boosting productivity by more than 40% per annum compared with operations before the Civica Enforcement (CE) platform and new working practices were introduced. The staff is now able to issue 30-35 letters daily against 15 per day in the past.

Fern Silverio, Divisional Director - Collections & Housing Benefits, Harrow Council, explained: "*Harrow's parking services administration is a highly transactional function like departments such as housing benefits and local taxation. We had already made massive efficiency gains in revenues and benefits. We knew that the same model of transformation could be applied to parking.*"

"Despite the management team having no parking experience, we have proved that in highly transactional departments a combination of automating parts of the process and a clear strategic vision can free up staff to concentrate on providing a higher quality service for our customers."

The council had clear objectives for the transformation of its parking services division:

- > Reduce costs of administration per ticket
- > Automating appropriate processes
- > Develop a web-based mobile service that helped improve customer interactions

Fern Silverio said: "*We had a tight deadline for the parking transformation programme of 5-6 months and we knew we wanted to work with a technology provider that shared our vision for a level of service in parking administration.*"

As well as sharing our goals and wanting to work in partnership, Civica was the only technology provider that offered Electronic Document Management software with document image and processing with the added ability to seamlessly integrate with, for example, our Customer Relationship Management System (CRM)."

Fern Silverio continued: *"We wanted to gain value from our Parking System, so the option to migrate to the Civica CE system with its integrated workflow technology meant we could more quickly automate the way we worked as well as integrate the technology to other council systems without the headache of setting up a new workflow as well as EDM. The cost saving benefit of this approach was also attractive."*

The change in technology was carefully managed with both Civica and Harrow appointing project managers and following the Prince 2 methodology to ensure the deadline for implementation was met.

Fern Silverio said: *"With such a tight deadline, it was critical we worked in partnership with Civica and expected the same level of commitment to the project from each other. "In addition to extensive data cleansing and archiving of the existing parking system prior to its migration to the new system, we needed to get everyone up-to-speed on the new EDM so user training for the parking administration team, contact centre and CCTV staff was necessary. The beauty of a new Windows based system was that staff training was quicker and we can see further time savings going forward when we use additional staff during busy periods. We have already found that we can replace expensive agency staff with students with no parking experience and have them fully trained in three to four months, saving time and costs."*

Civica's new parking management system offers easier management of incoming jobs for the parking team because a "traffic light" system provides a quick and easy visual check of priority-ordered jobs. The ranking system means jobs are more easily processed within a specified timeframe.

Once jobs are scanned into 8-10 simple categories, be that permits, appeals or representations, for example, managers can quickly see on a day-to-day basis what needs completing on a given day, offering them better resource and task planning. They can also run immediate reports showing what each employee has completed for a given period and the time taken against pre-set time targets for each category so knowing immediately if an employee has been productive.

Civica's parking management system for Harrow also provides mobile working options for both home and office workers and the 20 Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs). The web-based password-protected interface means any member of staff can securely access the system from office or home computers.

Any information collected on-street by CEOs is entered into GPS and GPRS-enabled handhelds and uploaded straight into the system in real-time. In the future this open process will be extended to citizens who will then be able to see the details of their penalty notice online as soon as it is entered in the system. If they choose to pay any fine then that would also be able to view immediately and transparently, as would any appeal.

Fern Silverio added: *"Any new penalty notice or contravention is instantly visible in the system to all employees connected with parking across the council, from CEO to appeals. The technology will enable us to make the whole parking process more transparent from CEOs attaching digital photos to contravention cases to eventually CCTV images of contraventions being automatically feed into the system."*

He also emphasises operational benefits for staff: *"The GPS-enabled handhelds also means we can see where any CEOs are at any time for both safety of the lone worker and management reporting."*

The Civica database part of the parking system may also be used for wider concessionary travel purposes, for example blue badges, in the future to help cut down on the amount of fraud relating to these permits.

Fern Silverio concluded: *"In addition to the huge efficiency benefits the Civica's system has given Harrow, it also offers us future-proof flexibility to further digitise the parking process. We see the partnership, together with the technology, as an opportunity to provide further efficiency savings but potentially additional revenue streams in the form of a shared service model for other councils."*

About Civica

Civica Group Limited (www.civica.co.uk) is a market leader in specialist systems and outsourcing services that help organisations to improve service delivery and efficiency, with specialist expertise in local government, social housing, education, healthcare, enforcement and other regulated markets. The group supplies more than 1,800 customers in the UK, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore and the USA, including 94 per cent of the UK's local authorities.

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