

West Devon BC upgrades its financial management system with Civica



"We are always looking at ways to improve the services we provide to residents and the introduction of electronic, automated business processes and financial operations that do away with paper-based systems and time-consuming manual entry and amendment of data. This has already enabled us to handle customer demands more effectively. We always strive to achieve the best value for money for our residents, so all these process efficiencies are important for us."

Carolyn Haynes
Principal Management Accountant, West Devon
Borough Council

The Challenge

West Devon Borough Council is a small local authority, providing services to 52,000 residents. An existing Civica customer, the council's finance team faced the challenge of increasing overall staff efficiencies, particularly in reducing its reporting cycles and streamlining general ledger administration as well as other functions including debt recovery.

The council also needed to streamline paper-based and other administrative processes, improve cash flow management as well as co-ordinate partners and external supplier transactions relating to the authority's services.

The continual pressure to modernise income processing systems and increase efficiencies prompted West Devon to work with business system specialists from Civica to upgrade and streamline its financial operations across the authority using the Civica Financials platform. This will also provide a platform for even better use of resources as we move forward with our shared service with South Hams.

The Solution

Civica has helped West Devon Borough Council modernise its financial system across all departments, enabling the authority to re-engineer its processes. Civica Financials is an 'n-tier' solution using Microsoft's component-based technology, for scalable distributed processing.

The integration of Civica Financials system with the Microsoft Office Suite ensures that users in different departments can access all information in real time over a user-friendly interface, which has dramatically reduced staff training costs and times.

West Devon was particularly interested in adopting intelligent scanning and web alerts modules. The new technology 'reads' invoice information and automatically imports it into creditors' database, making it available across all departments. An email alert with a payment request is then automatically issued to relevant debtors, who are then prompted to take action and process the payment.

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The new implementation has dramatically improved efficiency throughout the council and helped simplify general ledger and associated reporting, which has resulted in increased staff productivity and better services for residents.

Results

As well as enhancing service to citizens and partner organisations, the Civica Financials system has helped West Devon Borough Council to improve general ledger administration and reporting. The authority's new approach has helped reduce reporting cycles and provide a clearer and more regular overview of debtors and creditors, avoiding unnecessary duplications while increasing reporting accuracy. The system has also enabled the finance team to improve the authority's cash flow management as it generates payment requests to debtors at pre-set intervals.

In addition, West Devon Borough Council is also looking at moving to ICON hosted payment solution to deliver operational benefits for the council as it allows all departments to collect income more efficiently with full system reliability.

Payments are integrated with the existing Civica ICON software application, which enables simpler 24/7 telephone, online and card payment for partner organisations, suppliers and members of the public alike.

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In addition, the Finance Department's use of better processes and pre-set requests within Financials has forced other departments to improve their own systems/workflow. Thus the use of Authority Financials as replacement for diverse non integrated solutions and the extended use of the embedded workflow have ensured tighter, seamless and more efficient processes throughout.

The Future

West Devon is committed to different ways of sharing resources and knowledge with other local authorities to improve services for local people. The next step in the authority's forthcoming strategy is to strengthen its partnership with neighbouring South Hams District to use the platform under a shared service agreement to drive efficiencies and simplify general ledger administration and reporting.

Carolyn Haynes, principal management accountant at West Devon Borough Council, said: "We are now at the early stages of moving to a shared Finance service with South Hams District Council and we strongly believe that partnership working will help us greatly in delivering better services for our communities."

Benefits

- > Improved services to citizens
- > Real time review of invoices and data
- > Improved budget monitoring and general access to financial data
- > Less departmental time spent on IT support
- > Increased staff productivity and flexibility of tasks handled
- > Faster and more enjoyable staff training
- > Staff deployed for other departmental tasks



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