

Watford and Three Rivers councils safeguard service delivery with more reliable system support

Councils extend managed service deal to provide remote Database Administration for Capita's One Revenues and Benefits application



Watford Borough and Three Rivers District councils are neighbouring authorities in the south-west of Hertfordshire. They have several joint procurement contracts in place, allowing them to share services and achieve efficiency gains.

One such shared service is revenues and benefits, where the councils share systems and procedures for processing new claims and changes of circumstances for Housing and Council Tax Benefit.

To help deliver the service, the councils use a third-party revenues and benefits application. Rather than support the system in-house with their own IT staff, the councils purchased remote Database Administration (DBA) services from the software supplier to ensure smooth running of the system.

However, recurring technical issues meant that the councils were experiencing too much downtime, which had a knock-on effect on service delivery.

Ongoing downtime was causing concern

The ongoing downtime was increasingly worrying, and after losing a member of their internal technical team, the councils felt exposed to further issues that they wouldn't be able to resolve without continuing to rely on costly ad hoc services from their supplier.

The councils realised that they needed to make changes in order to improve service delivery efficiency.

They decided to investigate alternative suppliers and what they could deliver in terms of supporting the system, and so approached Civica.

"With our previous contract, the service was very reactive and each time an issue arose we had to discuss the cost of its resolution with the supplier. Now we have a flexible contract in place, we're able to budget much better, and we're receiving much better value for money," says Emma Tiernan, Head of ICT at Watford Borough and Three Rivers District councils.

Outcomes

- Reduces system downtime as a result of proactive processes
- Greater flexibility and lower cost than recruiting in-house staff
- Collaborative partnership ensures rapid problem-solving
- Frees up in-house IT team to focus on strategic projects
- Access to a range of OnDemand services when support is needed.

100%

of P1/P2 support calls resolved within contractual SLAs



Watford and Three Rivers councils safeguard service delivery with a more reliable Systems Support service.

Focus on a partnership approach

Civica currently provides remote DBA services to ten councils using the One Revenues and Benefits application. Our approach to partnership working ensures those councils are fully satisfied with the comprehensive support package they receive.

Watford and Three Rivers awarded an initial two-year contract to Civica, followed by a four-year extension to supply OnDemand IT System Support. The contract covers remote DBA services incorporating technical support for the Ingres RDBMS management system and all associated third-party software products, on both client and server infrastructure. Consultants with extensive technical experience provide full system administration support.

As with all of Civica's OnDemand services, systems support is provided via a flexible contract, allowing the councils to purchase any ad hoc support that is needed, such as server migration and module configuration, at a set, pre-agreed cost, helping them account for any future technical issues.

A significant factor that led to Civica's contract win, was that the councils were impressed by the Civica partnership ethos and willingness to share good practice.

To ensure that the partnership remains on track, Civica provides monthly performance reporting to heads of service, and holds regular service review meetings.

Delivering the service successfully also means that Civica has to work closely and collaboratively with some of the councils' other suppliers, for example their third-party helpdesk and document management system providers.

Paul Mason, Divisional Managing Director at Civica says, "In line with our tried and tested partnership approach, we've invested a significant amount of time in understanding the existing problems at Watford and Three Rivers and working collaboratively with the councils and their third-party suppliers. We've changed the system support service from a reactive to a proactive one. Now our focus is on a longer-term plan to make their system even more stable."

Migration to improved infrastructure

At the start of the contract, part of the initial work that Civica undertook was consultancy on the councils' infrastructure migration. They were moving to a new platform to help reduce the number of outages they were experiencing. As a result, system availability has significantly improved and there are processes now in place that ensure much better management of technical problems.

Jane Walker, Head of Revenues and Benefits at Three Rivers District Council says, "We have a fantastic collaborative working relationship with Civica. Their OnDemand team are more than happy to share their extensive systems and technical knowledge with us. Being able to tap into Civica's software and DBA experience has been invaluable, as those skills are very hard to come by."

Overall, the councils feel that the improved support has enabled them to deliver a much more consistent and efficient revenues and benefits service to citizens, and that Civica has been a contributing factor to this success.



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