Southampton City Council has been viewed as a leader amongst local authorities with its digital transformation strategy. However, one stage of the process remained labour intensive - scanning customer paperwork required for benefits claims to be processed.

As a trusted digital partner, the council engaged with Civica to implement a solution to empower customers to efficiently self-serve and scan the required documents.

Time-consuming and costly process

Over a recent 12-month period, more than 23,000 customers brought documents that needed to be scanned in to Southampton Gateway, the council’s ‘one-stop shop’ in the city centre. A recent snapshot survey showed that 127 individuals brought in 223 documents for scanning in a single day. This process was very time-consuming and costly for the council, as staff would have to scan the documents, verify them with a stamp and signature and then pass them to the document management team for scanning and loading into the Civica Documents (part of Civica’s Digital360 suite of software and services) system.

As an interim step, the system was modified to enable counter-staff to scan documents, but this still required the management team to manually attach them into the Civica Documents system. Yet, continuing to involve staff members in the process ran counter to the council’s overall digital transformation programme – which has been reducing the need for telephone and face-to-face contact with citizens for several years.

Easy-to-use for customers and staff

Having successfully partnered with Civica for over 10 years, the council asked the market-leading specialist to streamline
About Civica Digital

We help organisations that deliver essential everyday services to rapidly transform customer experience and improve operational efficiency. Offering a complete digital solution, from strategy consulting and solution design to software development and ongoing managed services, our in-depth business and technology know-how is founded on the creation of secure business-critical systems.

Our user-centred approach means we start with customer needs, putting insights, data and strategic thinking in the driving seat.

As a trusted digital partner, we are transforming services and improving lives for more than 500 customers across government, public safety, healthcare, travel & transport, financial services and other regulated markets. Discover how we can help you deliver the future at www.civica.com/digital

Civica Digital is part of the Civica Group, a market-leading specialist in business-critical software, technology and outsourcing services that help teams and organisations around the world to transform the way they work.

their citizen engagement and scanning process. Civica’s proven approach and methodologies delivered the project inside 3 months, with 11 self-serve scanning points opened in the Southampton Gateway one-stop shop.

Using a simple and intuitive touch screen interface, customers are now able to easily scan their required documentation for a range of services.

”The whole system is great and the customer interface is straightforward”

Linda Bratcher, Contracts Performance Officer
Southampton City Council

The scanned documents are then indexed and automatically integrated into case files in the Civica Documents system.

As Linda Bratcher, the council’s Contracts Performance Officer says: “The whole system is great and the customer interface is straightforward.”

The new self-serve facility goes further than revenues & benefits, as customers can use the scanning points to quickly scan documents related to parking permits, allotments and planning. The documents are automatically indexed and sent to the relevant department for processing, making this a onestop hub for many different council services.

This complete self-serve scanning solution has not only simplified and improved the customer experience, but has also streamlined the process and removed the need for staff input. As a result, the council has been able to redeploy them to frontline customer support, further improving their customer’s experience.

Improved customer waiting times

Despite introducing a new system, customer surveys undertaken by the council show that the vast majority of users now find the system intuitive and easy to use.

Lynn Phillips says: “You have to re-programme customer mindsets and we’re getting there. There was a bit of resistance to start with but not as much as I anticipated. On the whole it’s going well.”

Customers are also benefitting from reduced waiting times. Lynn says: “In the old days there was a queuing system when they came in. Now they go straight to a scanning point and it’s unlikely that they will have to queue.”

In terms of resources, the Gateway facility had 19 full time equivalent face-to-face staff when it opened. Due to the council’s digitisation programme, this has been reduced to 9.

Overall, the council’s transformation strategy has driven significant cost savings and as Linda says: “The self-serve scanning solution has certainly been an important part of that.”

“We’re all trying to save money wherever we can. If customers scan their documents themselves, staff don’t have to, so there’s a saving. And since the documents are going straight into Civica Documents, that’s another saving because the document management team don’t have to manually manipulate them.”

Lynn Phillips, Manager of Southampton Gateway
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