

A foundational step in Rochdale Borough Council's cloud migration strategy

Performance improvements, streamlined support and increased confidence with Civica's cloud-enabled software.



A comprehensive user of Civica Financials

Rochdale Borough Council, one of 10 local authorities in the Greater Manchester conurbation, provides services to more than 210,000 people. With excellent transport links; high numbers of STEM students; and high-speed broadband connectivity, Rochdale is working hard to bring new business into the area and improve opportunities for local people.

A Civica Financials customer since 2008, the council uses most of the modules on offer – including Creditors, Debtors, General Ledger, Purchasing and Assets. By 2018, it had rolled out the browser-based version of the Financials solution for almost all of its users.

£30k

of value delivered through migration to FinancialsLIVE

"The fact that we already had browser-based access to Civica Financials made the decision to migrate to cloud-enabled FinancialsLIVE easier," says Mark Barrett, Senior Accountant at Rochdale Borough Council. "We knew it would be a seamless transition for users."

From locally supported infrastructure...

As Civica Financials was an on premise solution, the council's IT team managed the infrastructure and application servers.

Unfortunately, required security patching and upgrades could only be applied within a specific timeframe leading to performance issues. Despite the IT team's best efforts, these demands could not always be met, putting business continuity at risk.

On top of that, austerity-driven decreases in IT resources and the loss of staff experienced in supporting Civica Financials, were affecting the level of in-house support.

Outcomes

- Easy adoption by Rochdale's 800 users with no need for training
- Resolution of performance issues, removing the risk to business continuity
- Simplified support provided exclusively via Civica's service desk
- Increased confidence in the council's wider cloud migration strategy

"We identified £30,000 of value from the migration to FinancialsLIVE by saving £20,000 on servers, up to £7,000 on IT support time, and the rest through efficiency gains."

Mark Barrett, Senior Accountant,
Rochdale Borough Council



Rochdale identified £30,000 of value alongside critical performance improvements.

So when Civica suggested migrating the council to FinancialsLIVE — the cloud version of the application that's fully managed by Civica — Mark was quickly on board. "Given the performance issues we were experiencing and our shrinking IT resources, moving from an internal support arrangement to a contractual one was an attractive proposition," he says.

...to the Civica cloud

At the same time, a costing exercise in support of a broader cloud migration strategy for Greater Manchester was underway. That meant Mark had all the numbers to hand when it came to building the business case for switching to FinancialsLIVE.

"Although our main priority was to assure performance and business continuity, we identified £30,000 of value from the migration by saving £20,000 on servers, up to £7,000 on IT support time, and the rest through efficiency gains," says Mark.

As one of the first councils to migrate to FinancialsLIVE, Rochdale was prepared to work collaboratively with Civica and pave the way for other councils to make the transition.

"We weren't under any time pressure to complete the move — what mattered to us and to Civica was getting it right," says Mark. As chair of the Civica Financials User Group, he's keen to support Civica's development of the software and to help other local authorities benefit from Rochdale's experience.

Migration completed, benefits delivered

For users, the migration was transparent: they didn't need any training, and the only change was a new link for accessing the solution. "Given that we have around 800 users, no training overhead was a key advantage," says Mark. The systems admin team also switched to FinancialsLIVE, as it provides all the additional features of the previous 'thick client' solution.

"Within a couple of weeks of completing the migration, we were back to business as usual," says Mark. "We're now considering further developments for our FinancialsLIVE system, such as adding payroll budgeting and making tax digital."

Importantly, migration resolved the previous performance issues straightaway; and took complexity out of the support equation.

With the council's IT team no longer needing to be involved, Mark simply reports any issues with FinancialsLIVE to the Civica service desk. In turn, they can take action more swiftly than before, as they don't have to dial in to Rochdale's infrastructure to access the software.

Confidence in the cloud

The success of the move to FinancialsLIVE has also boosted the council's confidence in its overall cloud migration strategy. Several other council systems are planned, or have now already been migrated, including HR, legal and adoption of Microsoft 365.

"The fact that it's a buyer's market makes it increasingly challenging for local authorities to retain IT professionals, so moving to the cloud has to be the way forward," says Mark.

“ It gives me peace of mind knowing that Financials — one of our core back-office systems — is managed and supported end to end by a global software provider like Civica.”

Mark Barrett, Senior Accountant, Rochdale Borough Council

